



2005/6 ATN Research Quality Framework (RQF) Trial

Curtin University of Technology
Queensland University of Technology
RMIT University
University of South Australia
University of Technology, Sydney

with
Murdoch University

Objectives



1. to obtain information/data on research quality across key research groups in participating universities
2. to explore methods for assessment of research impact appropriate to the mission and objectives of the participating universities;
3. to develop and test a robust and efficient mechanism for the assessment of research quality and impact across the participating universities and one which is informed by relevant national and international approaches;
4. to assist research groups in meeting the challenges of the RQF which was (at the time) anticipated for implementation nationally during 2007.

Trial Structure



- assessment of quality and impact using peer review panels
- institutionally-defined research “clusters”
- cluster submissions built on the (as then) understood RQF principles : data supported peer review of quality, case studies around broader impact
- 70 clusters in total; approximately 100 researchers from each University
- qualitative information and quantitative data assessed at both cluster and individual level
- 7 discipline-based panels chaired by PVCs
- panels included active researchers and end-users

Timeline



2005

- July – guidelines/templates for submissions released
- August – assessment panels established and assessment guidelines released
- August – cluster portfolios received
- September – submissions forwarded to panels
- October – assessment panel meetings
- November – finalised assessments
- December – feedback to all participants

Mid 2006 – international assessment

Assessment Guidelines



- QUALITY (1 – 5 Rating Scale)
 - Outputs: Significance, Originality, Rigour
 - Esteem: Recognition, Influence, Benefit
 - Environment: Strategy, Sustainability, Capacity
- IMPACT (A – E Rating Scale)
 - Demonstrable influence beyond discipline: Economic, Environmental, Social, Cultural
 - Adequate evidence from end-users required

Outcomes



- insights into the challenges that participation in ‘the’ RQF is likely to put in front of our researchers
- learnings, particularly around the assessment of research impact appropriate to the mission and objectives of the participating universities
- valuable understanding on research quality across key research groups in participating universities

Some general learnings :



- an assessment is made on the (quality) of the material presented
- researchers must be 'instructed' clearly on data requirements
- panels without experience tended to under-rate
- end-user assessors performed better if research connected
 - include assessors with cross-disciplinary expertise
- strategic overviews/contexts (backed by qualitative data, historical information, including for cross-referencing) help to demonstrate strategic potential/genuine collaboration
i.e. not artificial grouping

More general learnings :



- assessors required rapid support in 'data' validation
- data must be **consistent, accurate, auditable, relevant, 'cross-referenceable', source-identified, real not potential, comparative, not duplicated within a cluster**
- need for evidence in support of cross-disciplinary synergies
- how to handle/document/validate cross-institutional synergies ?
- multiple authorship papers : panels are assessing clusters not individuals, so does not pose a major problem ?

Assessing Impact

- case study approach can be useful and and valid
- adequate evidence of impact required to support claims; encourage evidence gathering
- understanding needed of the difference and relationship between impact and esteem factors
- must distinguish between impact on discipline against broader application impact accepted
- need clear explanations of how impact/s directly emanated from research results

Indicators/Evidence for Broader Impact ?

eg : prototypes/products/policy/changed practice



- third-party statements/surveys
- co-grants/contracts
- awards

*Refer : 'Measuring the impact of Research'
Michelle Duryea, Mark Hochman, Andrew Parfitt (ATN)
Research Global, February 2007, 8*

Impact Case Study

Best Practice Recommendation :

- title of impact case study
- brief history of the cluster and its staffing profile
- **publication data over a longer period at cluster level**
- general statement on impact of cluster as a whole
- outline each specific aspect of impact – academic, community and/or industry impact
- **provide details of beneficiaries**
- explain level of impact i.e. actual application or general influence with **adequate evidence**

Contact Details



Neil Furlong

PVC(R&I) RMIT University

and

Convenor – ATN Research Group

Telephone: (03) 93707954

Email: Neil.Furlong@rmit.edu.au