



Australian Government
Department of Education,
Science and Training

Newsletter

Research Quality Framework

Newsletter No.1 of March 2007

Introduction

Welcome to the first Research Quality Framework (RQF) Newsletter. The RQF Team has decided to circulate a regular Newsletter to all contact officers with a view to providing up-to-date information on the RQF and its progress towards implementation. The Newsletter aims to assist the consultation process and to keep you informed about developments and future plans.

I would like to thank everyone for their constructive input and assistance so far and I look forward to working with you over the next few years!!

Any comments or suggestions may be forwarded to the RQF Team at rqf@dest.gov.au

Cheers

Leanne Harvey
Branch Manager of RQF Taskforce

This edition of the Newsletter covers:

- The RQF?
- RQF announcements
- Discipline-specific Workshops
- RQF Trials
- Dispelling some RQF myths
- Latest Developments
- Contacting the Department

The RQF?

In May 2004, the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard, MP, announced the \$8.3 billion *Backing Australia's Ability* package which included an initiative to establish a Research Quality Framework.

The RQF is a new initiative that will assess university research for its quality and impact.

The Minister has stated that the RQF will affect two sources of research block funding, the Institutional Grants Scheme (IGS) and the Research Training Scheme (RTS) that in the past have been provided to universities without this type of assessment.

RQF announcements

On 14 November 2006, the Hon. Julie Bishop, MP, Minister for Education, Science and Training, announced the implementation of the RQF in 2008 with financial implications to flow in 2009.

<http://www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Bishop/2006/11/B002141106.asp>

On 18 December 2006, the Minister announced funding of \$87.3 million over 4 years to provide support for the implementation of the RQF.

<http://www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Bishop/2006/12/B001181206.asp>

This includes funding of \$42 million which will be provided to universities through two new programmes.

- \$16.4 million will be provided for the RQF Implementation Assistance Programme (IAP), which will assist universities to meet the costs of implementing the new requirements for data gathering and other preparation for the RQF; and
<http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/2B69F9E3-AB8F-41C1-92B3-233A5610D967/14983/IAP.pdf>
- \$25.5 million for the Australian Scheme for Higher Education repositories Programme (ASHER), which will provide assistance to the sector to establish or refine their institutional online systems for data storage, known as digital repositories. <http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/3765571A-6B53-4E39-90A1-0057245509C6/14981/ASHER.pdf>
- The remainder of the funding of around \$45 million will be utilised by the Department of Education, Science and Training for RQF preparatory work in 2007 and for RQF implementation in 2008. This will include pre-implementation trials; discipline specific workshops; preparation and distribution of RQF Specifications and panel-specific Specifications as well remunerating the assessors.

On 16 February 2007, Minister Bishop spoke at a RQF Symposium held at the University of Western Australia about the Government's aims in establishing a RQF process and the work that lies ahead.

On 20 February 2007, Minister Bishop announced the establishment of the RQF Reference Committee which includes representatives from industry, government and the research sector. It will provide advice on pertinent RQF matters during the first cycle of the RQF, including the development of RQF specifications, the moderation and validation process and the development of an RQF Information Management System.

<http://www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Bishop/2007/02/b002200207.asp>

Discipline-specific Workshops

Discipline Workshops were run during February and March 2007 to provide input into the development of the panel-specific sections of the RQF Specifications. These workshops were to provide input on appropriate research outputs and indicators to assess research quality and impact within the relevant panel area. The outcomes of these workshops will be published and used to draft the Panel-specific sections of the RQF Specifications.

RQF Trials

In the second quarter of this year, trialling elements of the RQF will commence, the details of which are still being finalised by the RQF Taskforce. Trials will be limited and DEST will soon be calling for expressions of interest from HEP cohort groups to tackle specific elements of the RQF process. As much as possible DEST will draw upon the experiences of trials already conducted in the sector.

Staff Census Date

There have been two notifications to RQF contact officers about the Staff Census Date. The notified modification is intended to prevent “game playing” ie. an institution “buying in” academic “stars” for short-term appointments of less than three years.

Dispelling some RQF myths

This section aims to highlight and dispel some of the myths regarding the RQF circulating in the sector.

- *Putting up more researchers in the RQF will generate a higher score for the Research Grouping!*

Submitting every researcher in a research discipline will not necessarily guarantee attaining a higher score for research quality or impact. Remember, it is the assessment of research quality and impact that determines the RQF score.

- *Research Groups that are made up of colleagues who collaborate on projects will receive bonus points in the RQF assessment process!*

The RQF will measure the quality and impact of the research group as a whole not the individuals involved. Bonus points – what a Furphy!

Latest Developments

On 28 February 2007, the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP, introduced the *Higher Education Legislation Amendment Bill No. 1 2007* into the House of Representatives. One of the functions of this legislation is to make funding available for ASHER and IAP. The Second reading speech is at:

http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/view_document.aspx?ID=2663437&TABLE=HANSARDR

Contacting the Department

If you have any queries, contact the RQF Team at this address rqf@dest.gov.au.

To keep up to date on the latest developments, visit the RQF website www.dest.gov.au/research/rqf.