



Newsletter No.2 of April 2007

Introduction

There have been a number of important developments since I last wrote:

- The Minister has announced Assessment Panel Chairs;
- DEST is in the process of inviting nominations for Assessment Panel members.
- Discipline Workshops were held in Canberra at the end of February and early March;
- RQF Trials are about to commence; and
- The RQF Reference Committee held its inaugural meeting on 26 March 2007.

This Newsletter provides more details on these developments.

Our consultation with the research sector will continue to increase over the next few months as we move closer towards finalising draft RQF Specifications. Your input into the process is most welcome and encouraged.

Should you have any queries or concerns on the RQF please feel free to contact the RQF Team at rqi@dest.gov.au.

Cheers

Leanne Harvey
Branch Manager of RQF Taskforce

MINISTER ANNOUNCES ASSESSMENT PANEL CHAIRS

On 17 April 2007, the Minister announced the 13 Assessment Panel Chairs for the RQF. The Media Release can be found at <http://www.dest.gov.au/ministers/bishop/media.asp>

The Assessment Panel Chairs are senior researchers of international standing who will ensure that Panels make judgements on the quality and impact of research submitted based on sound, transparent and accountable processes. They will also provide guidance on a variety of discipline specific issues during the development of the draft RQF Specifications.

NOMINATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT PANEL MEMBERS

DEST is in the process of inviting nominations for Assessment Panel members. Advertisements for these positions will appear in:

- The Higher Education Supplement of *'The Australian'* on Wednesday, 18 April 2007;
- *'The Financial Review'* on Friday, 20 April 2007;
- *'The Canberra Times'* on Saturday 21 April 2007; and
- *'The Weekend Australian'* on 21 April 2007.

Advertisements will also be emailed to four Australian Learned Academies (Academy of Science, Academy of Technology, Science and Engineering, Academy of Social Sciences and Academy of Humanities), Professional bodies and societies together with RQF contact officers. Nominations close on 14 May 2007.

OUTCOMES OF RQF DISCIPLINE WORKSHOPS

A summary of outcomes from the RQF Discipline Workshops, held in February/March 2007, is now available at www.dest.gov.au/research/rqf

After the Workshops, a follow-up Questionnaire was sent to workshop participants and university cohorts asking for further information on issues arising from workshop discussions. Participants were encouraged to prepare their responses in consultation with colleagues by COB 5 April 2007.

We have had an excellent response to the questionnaire, with more than 70 replies. Responses to the questionnaire will inform the draft of Panel Specific sectors of the Specifications.

RQF TRIALS ARE ABOUT TO COMMENCE

On 16 March 2007, DEST invited Expression of Interests (EOI) from higher education providers to participate in Pre-Implementation Trials for the RQF. The purpose of the trials is to inform the development of the RQF Specifications. The intention is to conduct selective pre-implementation trials, rather than run a process equivalent to the full RQF. Participating institutions were asked how they would conduct the trial, within the context of the following issues which have been identified for testing:

- Multi-disciplinary work ie. groups submitting work for assessment across RFCD codes and/or discipline panels;
- Cross-institutional work ie. work that either involves cross-institutional collaboration and/or work with multiple claims from researchers across institutions;
- Group size ie. whether there are particular issues to be taken into consideration in the assessment of work presented by groups of significantly different size;
- Group coherence ie. whether there are particular issues to be taken into consideration in the assessment of work presented by actual research groups and those which have been formed for the purposes of RQF processes;
- Assessment of Non-Traditional research outputs such as live performances etc.

Twelve HEPs have been selected to trial these and related key issues. The trials will commence shortly, and are expected to conclude in mid-June. The results of the trials will be reported through the RQF website at www.dest.gov.au/research/rqf

Thank you to all the institutions that expressed an interest in this process.

OUTCOMES OF RQF REFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING

The inaugural meeting of RQF Reference Committee was held in Canberra on 26 March 2007. Set out below is a summary of the issues discussed and key outcomes reached during this meeting. The next meeting of the Reference Committee is scheduled for 24 April 2007.

COPYRIGHT

In conjunction with the Council of Australian University Librarians and the Open Access to Knowledge (OAK) Law Project at QUT, DEST is working on an approach to managing copyright issues for the RQF. DEST intends that there should be no need for institutions to negotiate licences to use copyright materials, however early identification of copyright owners of research outputs should be a priority for all institutions.

ASHER/IAP PROGRAMMES

Australian Scheme for Higher Education (ASHER) and Implementation Assistance Programme (IAP) Guidelines are currently being drafted and will be provided to the Reference Committee and the sector for consultation in this quarter 2007.

RECRUITMENT OF ADVISORS

The majority of the assessment will be undertaken by Assessment Panels, but Panels may call on the expertise of Advisors as required. The recruitment of Advisors will commence in the third quarter of 2007.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (IMS) – BASIC DESIGN

Scoping of the RQF IMS has begun. One consideration is that evidence portfolios may be submitted to DEST via a system to system interface, for example web systems. Evidence portfolios will include direct links to research outputs. Assessment Panel members and Advisors will click on the links to access institution repositories to assess research outputs.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (IMS) – KEY DATES

In December 2007 institutions will be asked to provide Expressions of Intention to Submit (EIS).

In March 2008 the IMS will open for submissions of Evidence Portfolios.

The deadline for Vice-Chancellors Certification of Full Submissions is April 2008.

DEST is investigating the possibility of allowing institutions to view their submissions in the way an Assessment Panel would during the period between the IMS opening and certification by the Vice-Chancellor.

PRE-IMPLEMENTATION TRIALS

DEST wrote to RQF Contact Officers in March 2007 inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI) to participate in RQF Pre-implementation trials. Institutions have been asked to submit a brief EOI including a draft budget, an outline of proposed methodology and which of the issues identified by DEST that they intend to focus on.

Flexibility is being maintained in what institutions have been asked to trial in recognition of the amount of work that has already been undertaken by the sector.

PROGRESS ON DRAFTING RQF SPECIFICATIONS

Level A Researchers

Work is continuing with regard to the issue of inclusion of some Level A researchers. The conditions are if they are a named researcher on an individual competitive research grant that is active on the Staff Census Date and listed on the Australian Competitive Grants Register for 2006.

Adjunct and Honorary Researchers

Following discussion by the Reference Committee, there was strong support to keep the rules governing eligibility simple and clear.

Further work is being done on clarifying the rules around this issue.

Assessment of Impact

The issue of whether an Impact Statement of 10 pages would disadvantage a large Research Group has been identified as requiring further work and will be considered for inclusion in pre-implementation trials.

Further work is being undertaken to identify possible types of end-users.

Allocation to Home Panel

A Research Group will nominate its preferred home Panel through the submitting Institution rather than have its Evidence Portfolio allocated according to greatest share of RFCD code.

Assessment Panels will retain the discretion to redirect EPs to another Panel if required.

Multidisciplinary and Cross Institutional Research Groups

The Expert Advisory and Development Advisory Groups recognised the value of collaboration in achieving excellence. With this principle in mind, the Reference Committee is considering the following issues:

- whether a researcher can be in multiple Research Groups; and
- whether for reporting purposes the total number of eligible staff in an institution will be restricted to those that have produced four outputs.

These outcomes will be taken into consideration in drafting RQF Specifications.