



University of  
South Australia

# RQF READY

## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE RQF

*Professor Caroline McMillen*  
*PVC & VP: Research and Innovation*



The past few months have been busy ones in relation to the RQF as the University has worked to assimilate batches of new 'RQF material' released by DEST and to meet the almost weekly RQF deadlines imposed by

DEST as we work to review draft guidelines, specification requirements and respond on RQF matters great and small. DEST has now released the final versions of the RQF Submission Specifications, Panel Specific Guidance documents and the RQF Technical Specifications (these documents are available for your information on the University's RQF Information Hub). DEST has also notified the research community about the final composition of the 13 RQF Assessment Panels and I would encourage you to review the composition of the Panel relating to your discipline at <http://www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Bishop/2007/09/B001180907.asp>. I should note that I'm delighted that Professors Pal Ahluwalia and Phyllis Tharenou from UniSA have been selected to sit on RQF Assessment Panels.

DEST has now provided details of the financial support to support University participation in the RQF and UniSA was awarded ~\$179,000 through the RQF Implementation Assistance Program and ~\$333,000 through the Australian Scheme

for Higher Education Repositories. These funds are intended to assist the University meet the costs of the extensive data gathering requirements and of the establishment of a digital data storage system for the RQF

Finally and importantly, DEST has also announced that the tiered ranking lists for outlets and publishers in all discipline areas will be released in November this year. These lists will provide researchers and their institutions with an indication of the 'quality tiers' for each publication outlet and will be very useful for all researchers planning their careers, independently of the RQF.

During September, the UniSA Internal Discipline Panels provided their advice on the composition of our optimal research groupings for each of the 13 RQF Panels. This was a difficult exercise given that the RQF exercise is focused on a 6 year production period during which the University, as a young research organisation, was building its research effort from a necessarily low base. All researchers who have been nominated as members of research groups have been notified and the research groups are now busy working on the first draft of their Evidence Research Portfolio. These groups will be particularly busy between September and early November as they work to develop both the quality and impact components of the Evidence Portfolios. The work will not stop after November as we will move to a second draft stage in early 2008. To everyone involved in a research group, I would like to thank you in advance for the work in the months ahead and I know that you can be sure that your colleagues will support you as

you juggle all of the competing demands of a busy academic research career.

As the external and internal information has come to hand, the RQF Submission Team has run a series of RQF Information sessions for Institute and Centre Directors, Head of Schools, researchers who have submitted an Individual Research Portfolio and for Academic Board – at each of these sessions I've emphasized that whilst we will work enormously hard to generate the very best UniSA submission for the 2008 RQF exercise, we must focus on building the quality and impact of our research outputs from now. This is critical if we are to meet the demands of the next iteration of the RQF or whatever 'metrics based quality assurance framework' is implemented by the government of the day. There is no doubt that research careers of the future will be built on research quality and impact - so there's no better time to start than today!

#### UNDERSTANDING IMPACT WORKSHOPS



As part of the RQF process, Research Groupings will be asked to develop Evidence Research Portfolios. One important element of an Evidence Research Portfolio is an Impact Statement.

Each Research Group has 10 pages for an evidence based statement of claims against generic and panel-specific impact criteria and up to four supporting impact case studies which illustrate the research's impact. To better understand how to write and position an Impact Statement and to determine which impact case studies should be included, the University held four (one per Division) Understanding Impact workshops on 28 and 29 May 2007. Mr Duncan Buckeridge from Deloitte who has experience in assessing economic impact was engaged to lead these workshops.

The workshops were a valuable experience for all those who attended. Below are some attendees' reflections.

*Professor Doug Brooks  
Professional Research Fellow, Centre for  
Pharmaceutical Research  
(Attended Health Sciences workshop)*

Unlike previous funding models, it was clear from this workshop that research impact will feature strongly in the equation for the determination of RQF funding. Thus, the workshop highlighted that both consequences of research and evidence of usage will become important metrics for RQF assessment.

The workshop was informative on how this would most likely be assessed and how the justification for a high ranking in impact can be developed. This was further strengthened and exemplified through a series of case studies. Exactly how indicators like patents, product sales, commercialisation agreements, treatment strategies, alterations in policy, changes in practice, and saving of lives will be translated into metric measures of cultural health and economic outcome is still unclear. However, the workshop still gave good insight into how the case for these measures might be improved.

In this context, Health Sciences had numerous examples of high impact research outcomes that should rate highly on the basis of scale and impact. There was also some speculative discussion on how key indicators might be restricted for assessment purposes and the interaction/composition of Research Groupings. It was evident that the presenter was highly skilled in building a case for quality and impact and that this person should be co-opted for case setting when RQF submissions are submitted. This could possibly involve researcher interviews followed by centralised case development and submission.

*Professor Margaret Peters  
Senior Lecturer, School of Communication  
(Attended Education, Arts and Social  
Sciences workshop)*

A very useful workshop on the RQF impact assessment was presented to a small but engaged audience of researchers working in the fields of creative industries, arts, humanities and social sciences. A particular strength of the presentation and the subsequent group involvement was Duncan Buckeridge's clear articulation of the

difference between research *usage* and research *impact*. Given the proposed scoring of the impact dimension and the assumed non-linear funding model that may eventuate, this is an important distinction for researchers to not only understand but to act on.

What should be appealing to researchers in the arts, humanities and social sciences fields is the emphasis on telling the research narrative. Mr Buckeridge stressed that impact assessors are essentially an educated lay audience so a compelling impact statement must convey the story and take into account the entire research journey; from conception to application and impact. Mr Buckeridge also stressed that the extent to which the impact statement will be compelling depends on the quality of the evidence supporting the claims at *all* points of the research journey.

Examples provided from participants were then amplified by Mr Buckeridge to demonstrate how this could be organised. An education grant focusing on workplace training was illustrated in terms of the importance of focusing on and documenting the behavioural *change* perceived as necessary in this area. Measuring such change has been traditionally perceived in this field as problematic. The point was made by Mr Buckeridge that as impact is about *demonstrable* change, the extent to which an impact statement will be compelling depends on the quality of the evidence supporting the claims at *all* points of the research journey. Therefore, gathering data about pre existing conditions needs to be aligned to the particular research fields and contexts so that change can be *appropriately* assessed.

The concepts of *impact attribution* and *additionally* were then highlighted as two key inter related issues which Mr Buckeridge stressed must be addressed when articulating the final stages of the research journey. Drawing from a participant's research grant on reporting traumatic events, Mr Buckeridge stressed that the impact moves beyond the findings' use for a particular journalistic cohort to demonstrating the additional benefit of such research to other end users in the wider community.

The workshop presented a critical message which is likely to alter the ways in which researchers in the creative industries, arts, humanities and social sciences approach their research in the future.

## RESEARCH QUALITY ESTIMATIONS USING BIBLIOMETRICS

Mr Michael G. Crisp  
RQF: Analysis Officer



Ever wondered how to measure the quality of your research publication? Here are a few traditional ways to start your analysis:

### 1. Papers

If you research in a field where the major outlets for your research are journals then the number of papers you publish is an indicator of your productivity as a researcher. The more papers you publish the more productive you appear to other researchers. However, this does not necessarily indicate the quality of your research. You must also look at citations and impact factors.

### 2. Citations

When one research paper references your work published in another paper this is a citation and can be thought of as an indicator of quality. The more citations your paper gets; the higher the quality of your work. Each time you reference someone else in one of your publications you are giving that person a quality "vote". Citation counting does not take into account the quality of the citing paper or whether the cite is a positive or negative cite.

### 3. Citations Per Paper (CPP)

This is the number of citations you have received divided by the number of your publications. This simple calculation demonstrates, on average, how many times each of your papers is cited. The higher the CPP number the higher the quality of your research. This number is often used to represent the quality impact you are having in a field (this is not the same as impact in the RQF). CPP is an average and can be misleading due to a couple of very highly

cited papers, or by having a large number of low cited papers.

#### 4. Journal Impact Factor

Not to be confused with impact in the RQF, the higher the impact factor of the journal you are publishing in the higher the quality of that journal. The journal impact factor tells you on average how many times articles published in the last two years have been cited. It is good to publish in journals with high impact factors as in theory this means that your research will be cited more often. However, impact factors cannot be easily compared between disciplines and there are many other factors that influence impact factor such as, the number of review articles, self-citations, publication frequency and subject category.

#### 5. Relative Citation Impact (RCI)

The citation impact for a group of researchers is the number of citations per paper that that group has received over a certain time period. A RCI can be calculated for any group of researchers and compared to an appropriate baseline. The citation impact for a field of research can be calculated for, say, the world and then the citation impact can be calculated for various institutions around Australia and their impact, relative to the world, can be compared as a measure of quality. By this definition the RCI for the world is always 1.00 for any field and therefore if the RCI for an institution is greater than 1.00 then it is performing above the world average for that field. Conversely if the RCI is less than 1.00 the institution is performing poorly compared to the average for that field in the world. Often the source of the data may be provided in such a way as to make direct comparisons with groups or individuals quite difficult. This may include inconsistencies in the naming of research fields and subject categories.

#### 6. H-Index

Do you know what your h-index is? To calculate your h-index take a list of your publications and sort them from the most cited to the least cited. Scan down the list until you find the minimum number of publications with an equal number of citations. As an example if you have at least five publications with five or more citations each then your h-index is 5 (this is

regardless of your total number of publications), or if you have at least 30 publications each with 30 or more citations then your h-index is 30. If you have a high h-index you can consider yourself to be a high quality and highly productive researcher. Note though that the h-index was originally designed for the field of physics research. The h-index works quite well for the physical sciences but may not directly transfer to other fields of research such as the humanities and social sciences. There are also now alternatives to the h-index which take into account the length of your research career.

#### 7. Tiered Ranking Lists

What do you do if the outlets for your research are not ranked by Thomson? What if they are not even journals? Research outputs that may have related metrics could include conferences, books, book chapters, or journals not indexed by Thomson. In the light of increasing demand for bibliometric data to analyse research quality, many professional associations have been busy creating discipline specific lists of ranked outputs and outlets. A number of these lists are accessible through the UniSA RQF Information Hub and you may well already be using such lists to direct your research output publication. If you are aware of such a list that is well regarded within your field of research please inform Research and Innovation Services ([Michael.Crisp@unisa.edu.au](mailto:Michael.Crisp@unisa.edu.au)) as it may well be a useful tool for the ranking of research outputs for the RQF. DEST is also in the process of creating ranked lists of outputs for use in the RQF.

### RQF AND REPOSITORIES

*Ms Helen Livingston*  
*Director: Library Services*



The RQF requires research assessed in the RQF processes to be stored in a digital repository. Given the number of research outputs to be assessed for the RQF process, using research repositories is the only feasible way to get such a large number of research outputs (four per researcher) to the

13 panels each with 12 members and any number of advisors.

In the recently released *RQF Submission Specifications* and *Australian Scheme for Higher Education Repositories (ASHER) Administrative Information* DEST has outlined how it expects panel members to have access to the research outputs each institution submits.

UniSA will use its recently launched ARROW@UniSA as its repository. DEST have now made it clear that the research output the panel wish to assess is the published version or a "postprint". Pre print versions and unpublished versions will not be acceptable.

ARROW@UniSA already holds citations and some "full text" of UniSA research outputs covering the last five years, but now DEST have clarified exactly what panels will require some more work will be required to ensure that the version held meets the RQF Specifications

One of the complexities which UniSA will need to cover is the copyright implication of making "published" works available to non UniSA members. The Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) and DEST have negotiated with some publishers to allow storage and communication of research outputs for the RQF. UniSA will have to negotiate separately with any other publishers not listed in the agreement to ensure panels can have access to our researchers "best" publications. The list of publishers can be found on the DEST website. The Library will undertake negotiations with non listed publishers on behalf of the University.

Acceptable research outputs include books, book chapters, journal articles, letters reviews, and conference publications but can also include audio-visual recordings, computer software, patents, technical drawings, exhibitions and even devices and products. ARROW@UniSA can store research outputs in a variety of formats and once decisions have been made on the research outputs to be submitted as part of UniSA's portfolio, work will commence on

ensuring that all the outputs can be made accessible.

ARROW@UniSA was intended to be a showcase for UniSA research as well as a means of making UniSA research outputs easily accessible. ARROW@UniSA was also intended as a way of preserving UniSA research outputs for future generations. The emphasis over the next 12 months will be ensuring that all the relevant research outputs that make up UniSA's Evidence Research Portfolios is in the repository and accessible to RQF panel members.

For more information on the RQF please visit the UniSA RQF Information Hub:

<http://www.unisa.edu.au/rqf/default.asp>