



University of  
South Australia

# RQF READY

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the first edition of the **RQF Ready** newsletter. The RQF Action Group will be sending these newsletters out on a regular basis to keep you informed about UniSA's progress in preparations for the RQF.

## A Green Light for the RQF...

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



After much anticipation, on 14 November 2006, the Minister, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP released the Development Advisory Group's paper "[The Recommended RQF](#)" and announced the

Government's endorsement of the RQF. Universities will make their RQF submissions to DEST in 2008 and funding will be implemented in 2009.

Prior to this announcement your University [RQF Action Group](#) has been working hard on a set of implementation and communication strategies to ensure that UniSA will indeed be **RQF Ready!**

UniSA has participated in the [ATN RQF Trial](#); developed a [RQF Information Hub](#), and has been monitoring and analysing information from [International Research Quality Assessments](#) and [DEST](#). The RQF Action Group members have given presentations about the RQF to many

groups across the University and more of these are scheduled in the next few months.

The RQF Action Group is also currently overseeing the implementation of an online Individual Research Portfolio (IRP) system to help staff members collate details of their research outputs, esteem factors and contribution to the research environment. It is this type of information which will be the starting point for developing our final RQF submission.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the University community for your patience and sustained interest in the RQF over the past 12 months. Now that the Minister has given the 'green light' there is clearly a great deal of work to be done to ensure that we are ready to make a polished RQF submission to DEST on the 30 April 2008. This newsletter will keep you updated about our progress. In the meantime we also have to maintain our focus on building research capacity, engaging with our research partners and of course, the main game - that is, carrying out research of high impact and high quality!

## RQF from an EASS perspective

*Professor Drew Dawson  
Dean: Research (EASS)*



There is no doubt that the emerging RQF has stimulated a lot of debate throughout the Australian University sector

and in the humanities, arts and social science

(HASS) disciplines in particular. At present, many of these discussions centre on concerns that the RQF, through its proposed bibliometric assessment of research quality using the Thomson Scientific databases, could potentially disadvantage researchers who specialise in HASS research.

The important news for those of us working in EAS is that our concerns have not been ignored. The recent DEST Advisory Group Working Group Advice Paper on Quality Metrics acknowledged that, “*standard citation measures [are] not applicable in all disciplines, and an attempt should be made to develop and test alternative equivalent metrics for the applied sciences ..., the arts, the humanities and many of the social science disciplines*” (p. 3).

At the moment it is not yet possible to say which alternate metrics will be considered appropriate for EASS related-disciplines. Many have been proposed (e.g. tiered rankings of discipline appropriate research outputs) but the majority of these are still undergoing development and it is likely to be some time before they have been adequately trialled and/or validated.

In the meantime, it is essential that we focus on the main game. That is, achieving our traditional research priorities: timely postgraduate completions, winning grant money and, of course, producing and publishing good research.

... and remember, this is an issue being faced by all HASS researchers in Australian universities, not just UniSA and the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences.

For more information go to:  
<http://www.unisa.edu.au/eas/research/Research%20Quality%20Framework/>

### Why is impact important to UniSA?

*Professor Andrew Parfitt  
Director Institute for Telecommunications  
Research*



The RQF will be the first research assessment exercise to measure impact. Impact may broadly be defined as the

influence of research or the adoption of research outcomes outside the academic domain. The assessment of impact is, however, the key link between the RQF and the objectives of the national innovation framework, and recognises that there is significant investment in research focused on producing outcomes that derive economic, social, cultural or environmental benefits for Australia and globally. This aligns well with UniSA's strategic commitment to valuing quality as well as ensuring our research is relevant to end users in government, industry and the community.

Unlike academic quality, the metrics of which are largely understood within the research community, measuring impact is a relatively new area. For this reason it is likely that impact will be assessed for a given research group in a different way to quality. There are, however, indicators of economic value, social or cultural influence or environmental benefit that can be identified in relation to research, and it has been shown that there are methods of evaluating the depth of such impact.

UniSA researchers will need to find robust ways of highlighting the many aspects in which their research has provided benefits to our external partners and communities. The assessment of impact also affords the opportunity to recognise our multidisciplinary, since many critical outcomes are dependent on the creative groupings in our Centres and Institutes.

### CDNM (ANZ) Nursing and Midwifery Project

*Associate Professor Bernard Hughes  
Dean: Research (HSC)*



The Health sciences subfields of Nursing and Midwifery have been identified as areas where Thomson

bibliometrics does not provide sufficient coverage of publications to adequately support peer review of research quality (Butler, L. CAVAL seminar 2006, Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (CDNM) Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) RQF response 2005).

In the CDN ANZ paper *Responding to the RQF*, it was noted that nursing and midwifery researchers publish in a wide range of medical, health sciences, social sciences and interdisciplinary journals and these journals tend to have established reputations presenting few problems for peer review assessment of quality, but they are poorly served by ISI based measures of impact and citations.

For this reason the CDN have commissioned a project on the "Development of a ranking of refereed journals in which Australia and New Zealand nursing and midwifery researchers publish their work". The project is being carried out at the University of Wollongong by a team that includes Associate Professor Sandra Jones and Professor Patrick Crookes. The project aims to generate a comprehensive list which captures all journals relevant to nursing and midwifery, derive a framework and criteria for judging the quality of relevant journals and determine "quality bands" to accurately characterise the quality of these journals. So far, following a rigorous data base search, a list of 657 journals has been generated. Work is currently underway to review strategies used to rank journals.

### **Bibliometrics – the tip of the iceberg**

*Helen Livingston*

*Director: Library Services*



The RQF will use metrics to inform the peer review process. One form of metric is bibliometrics. Bibliometrics is a way of analysing patterns of publication using

quantitative measurements and statistics within a particular discipline. It may be used to examine the work of a single researcher, or to compare the work of several researchers or the work of a group of institutions.

The *Web of Science* is commonly used to obtain bibliometric data and is mentioned in the RQFDAG Metrics Working Group paper (Sept 2006).

This database contains a unique searchable index that allows researchers to uncover the research that influenced an author's work or to discover the impact a published item has had on current research.

Some limitations of *Web of Science* are:

- the primary focus is on journal literature, ignoring to a large extent other forms such as books and conference proceedings
- the physical sciences are well covered by the *Web of Science*, however, other areas such as the social sciences are not
- for some disciplines the primary means of communicating their research outputs are through conference proceedings which are not indexed systematically in this product, computer science is an example.

For more information about *Being Cited* see <http://www.library.unisa.edu.au/research/rqfresources/beingcited.asp>

For any assistance with bibliometrics for the RQF please contact your Academic Library Team

<http://www.library.unisa.edu.au/about/contact/s/als.asp>

### **The RQF, impact and the visual and performing arts in the tertiary sector**

*Professor Kay Lawrence*

*Head of School, SA School of Art*



*CHASS workshop 26/9/06*

In order to prepare the visual and performing art sector of the humanities for the Research Quality Framework, the Council for the Humanities Arts and Social Sciences' (CHASS) workshop was organised to bring peak

bodies together to discuss the following questions:

- What are the most appropriate ways of evaluating research quality in the creative arts?
- What form of evidence is most pertinent for evaluating the impact of this research?
- How should this evidence be assembled and presented to assessors?
- Who should the assessors be?

Sixty-four senior staff from twenty-two universities and ten organizations, including the Australia Council and DEST, attended the workshop. The Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools' (ACUADS) members of the DEST RQF Working Groups on Quality and Impact, Anne Marsh and Su Baker, reported on the findings of these Groups. The findings were submitted to the Minister in September and have now been made public.

It was clear from the roundtable discussions between participants from different disciplines that 'RQF readiness' varied across the sector. There was a clearer understanding of the difference between professional practice and practice-led research in the visual arts sector rather than in film or design. For this reason participants saw significant value in working together to develop common metrics and peer-evaluation criteria, as well as a common approach to the context statements that will accompany submissions, to ensure clarity and consistency across the sector.

The workshop noted that non-text based research outputs are produced in disciplines other than the performing and visual arts, and metrics developed for this sector could be shared with other disciplines. Likewise the new technologies, commonly used in the creative arts, like web streaming and WIKI could serve a valuable role in reporting research and recording impact. Sharing such expertise could enhance processes employed in all assessment panels.

As definitive answers to the questions discussed at the workshop require further discussion and input from the sector. CHASS has written to the Minister requesting government support for follow up workshops for sector members to develop the metrics, peer-evaluation criteria and models for context statements.

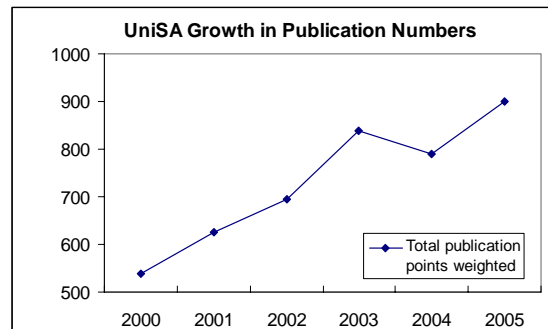
## Research Performance Growth Good News

*Sally Carpenter*

*Research Data Management Coordinator*

UniSA's Research and Innovation Portfolio is developing strategies to encourage and track our research performance growth. Good news is that our publication numbers have been continually growing, with an increase in total weighted publication points rising from 789.70 in 2004 to 901.09 in 2005 and our Supported Researcher Scheme numbers have also increased. This is an indication of research activity growth at UniSA.

The University has recently purchased two Thomson ISI Bibliometric databases which will provide information on measures of academic quality of some of our disciplinary research outputs, where bibliometrics can be used appropriately. Currently a Reference Group is trialing the use of these databases – we will report on their experiences in future Newsletters.



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

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