



University of  
South Australia

# RQF READY

## THE FUTURE OF THE RQF?

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



As I've travelled around our campuses during these past few months, researchers have taken me aside and asked – 'seriously, will there be an RQF?' This is a reasonable question in an election year, when higher education issues

in general and the RQF in particular, have been in the political spotlight. It's of note that the Labor Shadow Minister for Education and Training, Stephen Smith, has made it clear that Labor in Government would not proceed with the 'fundamentally flawed' RQF. This follows on from similar headline statements from Kim Carr, the Shadow Minister for Industry, Innovation, Science & Research. Stephen Smith has indicated that Labor will abandon the RQF, in favour of a research quality assurance policy that 'provides separate, objective measures that reflect research quality in broad discipline areas, including the Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, and Science & Technology'. The central issue of course, is what might be the key difference between a 'research quality assurance policy' and the currently proposed RQF?

It has to be said that the general view around the higher education sector is that the 'genie is out of the box' in relation to the inclusion of the measurement of both quality and impact of research outputs in block

grant funding to Universities. The view is that measurement of academic quality is an important advance on the current volumetric measure of research outputs in any research block funding formula. Furthermore, whilst it is accepted that the measurement of the broad impact of research outputs may be novel to the Australian RQF, institutions such as our own consider that the inclusion of impact is an essential component in any contemporary audit of research.

So as the debate rages on the national stage, should we wait for the storm to pass? The view of our RQF Action Group is that everything we do in preparation for an RQF should be aligned with our own research goals. We should work hard to ensure all researchers understand the importance of the metrics of research quality that applies within their specific research discipline. We should seek to support the career aspirations of researchers in a diverse range of disciplines and work to embed internationally accepted measures of research quality for all disciplines into our internal funding schemes. We should also focus on capturing the impact of our research in our work with industry, government and the communities – because this defines our research mission. So as we actively prepare for the RQF, on the timelines defined by DEST for the next 12 months, we will chart our own course though the choppy political seas, to ensure that all of our preparations enhance our research mission and momentum.

## The RQF and Measuring Quality for the Business Discipline (RQF from a BUE perspective)

*Professor Phyllis Tharenou  
Dean of Research (BUE)*



For business scholars, the RQF means measuring their current research performance and starting now to work towards producing research publications of quality for the future. The measurement of the quality of publications is

here to stay. Most schemes that measure research performance, whether external schemes (e.g. ARC grant rounds) or internal schemes (promotion at UniSA), expect applicants to produce publications of high quality and not simply produce a high quantity of publications.

Quality is often measured by how often a particular publication is cited (e.g. in the Web of Science, WoS) by other scholars in the field. The number of citations of a publication is important in the business discipline. Business scholars need to get their work cited. Publishing a highly original, meaningful piece of work that advances the field will gain citations, and is assisted by the paper being published in journals with good impact factors or that are classed as Tier 1 or 2. Publishing books with publishers that are in the Tier 1 or 2 class also supports the quality of the work. Producing these kinds of publications takes time and often a team of researchers working together, which has not always been the norm in business. Business scholars need to be starting their future research now to secure these kinds of publications for the future as they take years to produce. In order to justify the choice of one's four best publications, an argument needs to be based on how they advance the field. The Department of Education, Science and Training is likely to provide the number of citations per paper from the WoS for the research group and benchmark that number against that discipline. The RQF panel for business will use a basket of measures to assess the quality of the work of a group with metrics to be used as a support measure and not as a main measure. And is that a pig flying past my window?

## Individual Research Portfolios

*Sally Carpenter  
Coordinator: Research Data Management*



The past few weeks have been demanding on many UniSA staff members and researchers as Individual

Research Portfolios (IRP) were due to be submitted to Research and Innovation Services ahead of the official RQF process. A deserving thank you is required to the 2006 Supported Researchers who participated in the Phase 1 IRP roll out exercise. To date, more than 200 staff members have submitted an IRP – a sterling effort at such a busy time of the year and one which goes some way to providing information necessary to begin planning UniSA's Evidence Research Portfolio.

The IRP system allows researchers to create portfolios of their research which includes a selection of their four best publications. We have seen some very interesting publication choices and esteem factors supporting researchers' decisions.

Phase 2 of the roll out is about to begin and will involve staff on the Register of Research Degree Supervisors who have published between 2001 and 2006.

For those involved in Phase 1 and yet to submit their IRP, please forge ahead and submit them as soon as possible. The staff at Research and Innovation Services are more than happy to help you through the process to ensure your IRP is completed in the next few months.

## Albert Einstein: Research Impact

*Professor Stephen Priest  
Dean of Research (IEE)*

Email from Albert Einstein to Professor Caroline McMillen, recently intercepted by the RQF Action Squad

Dear Professor McMillen

Thank you for the kind offer of a three month professorial appointment at your esteemed

university commencing in early March. Although I have been dead for over 50 years you assure me this will present no major impediment to the appointment.

You sent me lots of information about the RQF which I'm afraid I have not heard of. I must say, your assertion that *'not being currently alive is a rather weak excuse for ignorance about the Australian RQF...'* was rather harsh.

You suggest that although the proper Research Assessment Period is 2001 to 2006 we should be able to substitute 1901 to 1906 without anyone really noticing. I wrote 15 papers during this period, but they're all in German so I'm not sure whether your assistant Mr I. S. I. Thomson will have catalogued them all. The big plus is that I was only 22 when I wrote my first paper on capillary mechanics so I think I could count as one of your Early Career Researchers.

You asked me to comment on the impact of my research. I believe my doctoral research at the University of Zurich on the dimensions of molecules, and my early theoretical paper on Brownian motion have had substantial impact in the scientific community, but I fear little impact on the group you describe as 'end users'. My paper on the photoelectric effect, published in 1905, postulating that light energy is transferred as individual units or quanta, has been rejected by my scientific peers. Another 1905 paper on the electrodynamics of moving bodies, which some people are calling the 'special theory of relativity', has no practical application at all. I fear my belief that imagination is more important than knowledge will continue to limit the impact of my research.

In conclusion, although I am honoured by your invitation, I suggest my research track record might diminish the performance of your university in the RQF, so I think it best if I decline your offer and continue to rest in peace.

Albert Einstein

## High Impact factor journal vs. high citation count for paper

Associate Professor Bernard Hughes  
Dean of Research (HSC)



In preparing for the RQF and improving my understanding of the Thomson Citation Products I have had cause to ponder on my own research publications of the relative importance of journal impact factor compared to citation numbers for papers. In my discipline area (broadly defined as biochemistry and molecular biology) the majority (i.e. 90% or so) of refereed journal publications are covered by the Thomson Database. Journal Impact Factor is basically a measure of how many times on average papers from a particular journal are cited. So one might reasonably expect that if you publish in journals with higher impact factors then the work will receive more citations (all things being equal). But, without trying too hard I can think of a couple of notable examples in my discipline field where work that that has been very highly cited and influential has been published in journals with relatively lower impact factors. Indeed I can think of one case where Nobel Prize winning work was in fact rejected by the higher impact factor journal.

Nevertheless in looking at my own publications its interesting to note that my most cited publications (cited 144, 84 and 83 times, respectively) were in fact published in journals which were about the highest impact factor journals that I could have reasonably sent the particular work to (Impact factors 5.9, 4.2 and 4.3, respectively). The three papers in question were each sent (after careful thought) to the journals in which they were published, in each case after minor revision, unlike some other papers on my CV that have been sent to "lesser" journals after rejection. I guess for me the take home message is strive to publish your work in journals that are most appropriate for the standard of the work. Aim high, but appreciate that if you do this then the work needs to be of a high standard.

## Measuring the Impact of Research in the Australian RQF

*Dr Mark Hochman  
Director: Research and Innovation Services*

The RQF differs significantly from existing international research assessment methods by considering research impact in addition to the more conventional quality measures normally used in the academic community.

The inclusion of impact is “a pioneering move which will create a world-first research evaluation measure”. (the Hon Julie Bishop MP, November 14 2006)

But what exactly is ‘research impact’?

‘Research impact’ is defined within the RQF as the beneficial application of research to achieve social, economic, environmental and/or cultural outcomes. Having an understanding of the definition of “Research impact” in turn raises the question “How is research impact to be measured?” It is certain that there are no currently accepted metrics that can be applied across disciplines to determine the extent of impact (in fact it is problematic even to find accepted quality measures which can be use across disciplines!).

Many readers will be aware that in 2005 the ATN undertook a RQF trial to evaluate how the parameters of the RQF might be implemented. The ATN has an applied research focus and was particularly keen to explore methods for the assessment of research impact appropriate for this focus. In the trial, participating research groups were asked to include impact in the contextualisation of their research, and up to three case study examples of impact were allowed from each group. Case studies were descriptive in nature and groups were encouraged to provide any evidence deemed appropriate to support their case. This led to a range of evidence both quantitative and qualitative in nature and including reference to end users of research who had implemented research findings and/or benefited in some material, social or cultural way.

Readers are referred to UniSA’s RQF Information hub  
<http://www.unisa.edu.au/rqf/default.asp>  
where a report of the ATN trial is available

for information including examples of case studies used – a short paper on the conceptual framework around this study, Measuring the Impact of Research, may also be of interest,  
<http://www-p.unisa.edu.au/rqf/atn/default.asp>.

Importantly, this trial found close agreement between academic and end-user members of the trial RQF panels in assessing impact. The Case Study approach has been featured in the November 2006 DEST paper “The Recommended RQF Model” and now seems certain to be the methodology used to describe Research impact within the Australian RQF.

Where to from here? UniSA has an Impact Working Party chaired by Prof Andrew Parfitt who will work with likely research groupings to determine case studies best illustrating impact in the disciplines covered within each disparate grouping. Watch this space in future editions of the RQF Ready Newsletter as more information unfolds.

### RQF Trivia Section – the Institute for Telecommunications Research’s approach to the RQF - Snakes and Ladders




See Attachment A –  
Have fun!

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

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

# RQF SNAKES & LADDERS

|   |  |  |                               |                               |                               |  |   |                               |    |
|---|--|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|----|
| 100<br>                                   | 99<br>ITR RQF submission lost in post – VC is NOT amused | 98   | 97                            | 96                            | 95<br>RQF<br>Watch this space | 94   | 93  | 92                            | 91 |
| 81  | 82   | 83<br>RQF<br>Watch this space  | 84                            | 85                            | 86                            | 88   | 89<br>Invent wireless communication system without wires.<br>Advance 2 spaces | 90<br>RQF<br>Watch this space |    |
| 80<br>Director of ITR wins Tori's 'Thank You, Thank You Award' for outstanding service to dot points.<br>Advance 3 spaces | 79   | 78   | 77                            | 76                            | 75<br>RQF<br>Watch this space | 74<br>Satellite launched and plugs hole in ozone layer | 73<br>ITR BDM implements new investment strategy at Sky City                  | 72                            | 71 |
| 61  | 62<br>Satellite falls on Queen's favourite Corgy         | 63   | 64                            | 65                            | 66                            | 67   | 68<br>RQF<br>Watch this space   | 69                            | 70 |
| 60<br>RQF<br>Watch this space   | 59   | 58   | 57                            | 56<br>Win Nobel Prize         | 55                            | 54   | 53  | 52                            | 51 |
| 41  | 42   | 43<br>Queen asks to meet debonair Director of ITR.<br>Advance 6 spaces | 44<br>RQF<br>Watch this space | 45                            | 46                            | 47<br>'Who Weekly' rejects ITR publications – again!   | 48  | 49<br>RQF<br>Watch this space | 50 |
| 40  | 39   | 38   | 37                            | 36                            | 35                            | 34<br>RQF<br>Watch this space                          | 33  | 32                            | 31 |
| 20<br>VC wins ITR raffle – NASA shuttle looks good in VC's garden.<br>Advance 6 spaces                                    | 19   | 18   | 17                            | 16<br>RQF<br>Watch this space | 15                            | 14   | 13  | 12                            | 11 |
| 2<br>RQF<br>Watch this space  | 1  | 3<br>NASA donates shuttle to ITR raffle                                | 4                             | 5                             | 6                             | 7<br>RQF<br>Watch this space                           | 8   | 9                             | 10 |