



Australian Council of
Deans of Education Inc.

The Submissions Officer
Research Excellence Branch
Australian Research Council
GPO Box 2702
CANBERRA ACT 2601

4 July 2008

Please find enclosed a copy of the submission for the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Initiative from the Australian Council of Deans of Education. We thank you for this opportunity to be able to respond.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sue Willis', is written in a cursive style.

Professor Sue Willis
President



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

**Excellence in Research
for Australia (ERA) Initiative**

**Making a Submission in Response to
the *ERA Consultation Paper***

June 2008

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH FOR AUSTRALIA (ERA) INITIATIVE: CONSULTATION PAPER

How to Make a Submission

This document contains notes to assist organisations prepare a submission, as well as the conditions for making a submission. Additionally it contains a submissions pro-forma that should be used for making a submission to the consultation paper on the ERA initiative.

How do I make a submission?

Submissions can be emailed, faxed and/or posted to the ARC.

Please note that only one submission can be made by each invited organisation.

Please provide your responses to the issues in the relevant spaces on the pro-forma.

If you choose not to respond to some of the issues, please do not delete the issue box, just leave the response area blank or enter 'Nil Response'.

If you have any comments on areas not addressed in this pro-forma please enter them in the space provided at the end of your submission.

Will my submission be published?

A report analysing the submissions may be prepared by the ARC in which case submissions or parts of submissions may be included in the report. Organisations may request not to have their details made public.

You should be aware that the ARC may be required to release the details of any submission (or parts of it) by the operation of law (for example, if required to do so by Parliament). The ARC can, therefore, give no undertakings that your submission (or parts of it) will never be made publicly available. If you have any concerns about this, the ARC suggests that you obtain your own legal advice.

Other conditions of making a submission

The ARC will neither consider nor publish any submission that, in the ARC's opinion, contains material that is or may be defamatory, insulting or otherwise inappropriate.

The ARC may include a statement to the effect that the ARC does not necessarily agree with the submission (or part of the submission) and the views expressed in it are those of the author. A statement of this type may accompany any submission or part thereof that the ARC makes publicly available or includes in any report.

The ARC will not treat any information in any submission as confidential to any person.

Other conditions of making a submission are described elsewhere in these notes and in the pro-forma for making a submission.

The ARC may use, reproduce and adapt any submission in whole or in part for any purpose described in these notes or the pro-forma (the "ARC's Rights"). Each individual and organisation making a submission must ensure that the ARC's Rights are not in conflict with (or that all relevant consents have been obtained in relation to) any right of any person,

including copyright, moral rights (as defined in the *Copyright Act 1968*) and any right to control the use or disclosure of information.

Where do I send my response?

Email submissions can be sent to era@arc.gov.au

Fax submissions can be sent to **(02) 6287 6601**.

A signed hard copy of the submission should also be sent to:

**The Submissions Officer
Research Excellence Branch
Australian Research Council
GPO Box 2702
CANBERRA ACT 2601**

The closing date for all submissions is **30 June 2008**.

If you have any questions regarding the pro-forma or any other aspect of making a submission, please contact the Research Excellence Branch at era@arc.gov.au.

**EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH FOR AUSTRALIA (ERA) INITIATIVE:
CONSULTATION PAPER**

Submission Cover Page

Organisation Name (if applicable)	Australian Council of Deans of Education				
Address	Faculty of Education				
	Monash University				
City	Clayton	State	Vic	Postcode	3800

Name of Contact Person	Professor Sue Willis				
Position	President				
Phone	: 03 9905 2800	Email	Sue.Willis@education.monash.edu.au		

Does the organisation consent to having its submission identified in a report on the outcomes of this submission process to be prepared by the ARC, which could be made publicly available on the ARC's website? (Y/N)	Yes
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Name of Authorising Person	Professor Peter Renshaw				
Position	Secretary & Treasurer ACDE				
Phone	07 3365 6227	Email	p.renshaw@uq.edu.au		
Signature	(required for hard copies only)				

Please ensure that all details on this page are completed.

Issues for Response

The ARC is seeking feedback from the sector on the issues raised in the Consultation Paper. These issues are highlighted in the pink boxes throughout the Consultation Paper and listed below.

Measures of Research Activity and Intensity, pages 7 and 8

1. *For the 2008 clusters of ERA, research activity and intensity data will be collected at the two-digit FoR level. Collecting this data at four-digit FoR level over the longer term would provide greater granularity of analysis and reporting. We welcome feedback on any implications that this requirement will have for the span of the reference period in terms of retrospective data collection.*

RESPONSE:

In those clusters where staff research activity is spread across FoR codes as is the case with Education (Economics of Education now with 1402; Educational Policy now with 1605; Sociology of Education now with 1608; Educational Psychology now with 1701; Educational Linguistics now with 2004; History and Philosophy of Education now with 2202) it will be difficult to accurately calculate FTE staff numbers related to each two digit FoR. A staff members' research activity may spread across multiple FoRs although their salary and support costs will be borne by a Faculty or School of Education. Evaluating the research productivity of groups sensibly will be impossible and 'results' potentially invidious if staff allocation and output allocation does not match.

2. *We recognise that non-salaried staff (honorary and adjunct) often contribute to the overall research effort of an institution. Therefore, we are seeking comments on the extent (if any) to which these researchers should be incorporated into staff FTE reporting.*

RESPONSE:

Non-salaried staff can be active and productive researchers. It is relevant to report their research activity associated with a specific group of researchers but we would prefer that such activity was reported separately from that of salaried staff.

Indicators of Research Quality, page 8

3. *Are there other core indicators of research quality that could readily be included?*

RESPONSE:

The ERA consultation paper notes on page 8 that "all research quality indicators will be collected by four digit FoR." For education research this is problematic because significant areas of educational research have been distributed across seven non-education FoR 4 digit codes and across two broad clusters (2 and 4). The interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary nature of education research creates specific

difficulties in representing accurately the quality of research being conducted at an institution. Researchers conducting research in the sociology of education, the history and philosophy of education, in educational psychology, in the economics or politics of education, and in educational policy are most likely to be situated in a School or Faculty of Education. They collaborate with colleagues and postgraduate students within that grouping but have their outputs collated in different non-education FoRs and across clusters.

We suggest, therefore, that to accurately capture the quality of the research output in Education at an institution, all categories of Education research should be collated and reported under a single heading (that is, the FoR codes in 13 as well as relevant education FoR four-digit codes in 14, 16, 17, 20 and 22).

An associated issue is the relative status of education journals within other disciplinary FoRs and clusters. The ranking of a journal by the education academic community may not be consistent with the ranking by another disciplinary group simply because the journal is not a mainstream outlet for the majority of researchers in that FoR.

Re ranking conferences:- it would be difficult to rank the comparative status of conferences in the field of education either nationally or internationally. If such a ranking were to be attempted, it would need to be coarse and as such it would not be sufficiently discriminating to be worth the effort. Any attempt to rank conferences would require close consultation with the researchers in the field. Conferences in Education are either specialist conferences focussing on quite narrow fields of research (mathematics education; science education; history and philosophy of education) or else inclusive generalist national conferences such as AARE; ATEA, or international conferences such as AERA; BERA; EARLI. Each type of conference attracts different participants and provides specific opportunities for networking and reaching targeted audiences.

Re ranking publishers:- publishers have been amalgamated, consolidated, sold and bought over the past few years and have changed their practices and their intended audiences in ways that are difficult to track accurately. Given that Educational Researchers do publish much of their research output in books, there would seem to be some benefit in ranking publishers. If this process were to be attempted, however, it would require extensive consultation with researchers in the field and a broad survey of researchers similar to that conducted for journal rankings by AARE

Re the profile of citations:- different disciplines and areas of research have different histories and practices regarding publication outlets, and this needs to be acknowledged in the core indicators. Educational researchers publish their research in themed books as chapters, as research monographs and reports, as well as in refereed journals. Relatively few (<10%) of the Education journal outlets are listed in the ISI (CHASS, 2006), and the citations associated with book chapters, research monographs and reports is less well developed in the ISI system. Thus, ISI measures will be inadequate for discriminating between the quality of educational researchers' output and will tend to privilege specific areas where there are different disciplinary practices – for example, we note the point made by AARE regarding the high citation rates of articles in medical education journals, as well as the high impact factors of

articles published in journals dealing with engineering and management education. It is not that articles in these journals are especially outstanding (in comparison to all other education articles) but that the researchers in those fields tap into different practices within the disciplines of medicine, engineering and management. Again, this highlights the practical difficulties of interpreting numerical indices such as ISI citation rates in the interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary field of Education.

Indicators of Success in Applied Research and Translation of Research Outcomes, page 8

4. *What other discipline-specific measures of excellence in applied research and translation of research outcomes should be considered by the Indicators Development Group, and how should they be benchmarked?*

RESPONSE:

Education researchers address issues related to policy and practice in education at various levels and in different sociocultural contexts. Basic research is necessary to understand how these complex systems operate, change and develop. Nonetheless most education researchers seek to translate and apply their research in order to improve practice and influence policy through the collation of research evidence. Thus, discipline-specific measures in applied research are important to educators.

Clearly ARC Linkage grants and other State and Commonwealth awarded research grants should be counted. Beyond counting grants and associated publications in practitioner journal outlets, the influence of researchers on educational policy and practice cannot be easily measured by metrics. Practitioner ranking of journals could be trialled and developed as a metric. Other metrics such as citations in Government Reports and Policy Documents and Initiatives could be trialled and developed for future ERA exercises.

5. *We would welcome suggestions regarding types of practitioner-focussed outlets that may indicate excellence in applied research or translation.*

RESPONSE:

This requires specific development and trialling before implementation but in principle it appears to be a feasible addition

Research Income Data, page 9

6. *How feasible is it to collect category 2-4 research income data at four-digit FoR? Are there specific issues for each category for retrospective collection? Are there specific issues for future collections in Category 3?*

RESPONSE:

Nil response

7. *Are all the income categories necessary or appropriate? What additional income streams could be collected under Category 5?*

RESPONSE:

Categories 1 -3 are most relevant to Education researchers. Category 4 income by and large is not relevant to education research. A few individual researchers may be members of CRCs or receive support for CRC related projects.

Of particular relevance to Education researchers are ALTC grants (formerly Carrick grants). In general, income from ALTC should be counted as a National Competitive Grant income because these projects are competitively awarded, reviewed by panels of peers and conducted in a manner similar to other applied education research projects.

8. *What would the most useful research income reference period be for ERA, considering this does not need to be the same as the six-year publications reference period (see page 10)?*

RESPONSE:

Calculating research income is actually less cumbersome than tracking publications. A three year period for research income could distort the evidence, given that many grants are 2 – 3 years in length and researchers are limited in the number of ARC grants (for example) that they can hold and apply for at any time. A longer period than 3 years (5 years) would provide a more consistent and reliable evidence base for the research income of a group.

9. *How practical is it to request numbers of successful grants in addition to research income?*

RESPONSE:

We support counting the number of successful grants. Success in peer-reviewed granting schemes is an excellent measure of esteem regardless of the \$\$ value of the research project. Depending on the topic and focus of the research, some projects do not require large sums of money. For example, we know of many practitioner oriented research projects that have modest budgets but involve networks of teachers and researchers in applied research of considerable influence and relevance. These kinds of projects – that are supported by peer-reviewed granting bodies - should be held in high esteem and therefore counted in the ERA.

Research Publications Data, page 10

10. *A list of other possible publications types is provided in Appendix B of the Consultation Paper. We are seeking feedback on whether there is support for these types to be included for individual disciplines and whether these categories are appropriately identified.*

RESPONSE:

We can see that some disciplines would want to add certain types that are relevant to their practices. We have no objection to such additions in principle. The key aspect of an exercise such as this is to ensure that there is widespread agreement about the relevance and status of such publication outlets. In general we are satisfied with the 4 categories already included

Publication Reference Period(s), page 10

11. *Should all non-publication data be collected over a shorter reference period? If so, what would that period be?*

RESPONSE:

Nil Response

Attribution, pages 10 and 11

12. *Please provide comment on the above approaches for attributing publications.*

RESPONSE:

We prefer Approach 2. This approach recognises more than the individual as important in judging research excellence. Research excellence can be predicted from collective and institutional factors such as collegiality, mutual support, sharing of ideas, vibrant research and postgraduate student culture and an environment that values research excellence. Thus, attributions need to be assigned to the institutions where the person was employed at the time of submission of the publication or award of the research grant etc..

In contrast, Approach 1 implies that the individual is totally responsible for their research output. If they were very successful in one institution with a vibrant research, they would be in a position to apply for a position elsewhere. It would be a distortion to suggest that the second institution was responsible for the research output achieved at the first place of employment. Thus it is ill-advised to attribute all research outputs of a staff to their current employer, rather than to the employer and research group where the research was completed.

Data Suppliers, page 12

13. *Which citation data suppliers in your experience result in the most meaningful citation analysis for each of the disciplines?*

RESPONSE:

We refer the committee to the AARE response to question 13 – we agree with their proposal and detailed analysis

Research Training Data, pages 12 and 13

14. *Please provide comments regarding research training indicators. Is it possible to provide HDR completions data retrospectively at the four-digit FoR level?*

RESPONSE:

We support in principle any attempt to foreground the importance of HDR data as indicators of research excellence.

15. *Do you see value in tagging research outputs as authored by HDR students and value in the analyses this will produce?*

RESPONSE:

There are practical problems in determining when a HDR author makes a transition either from being a colleague (not enrolled in a doctoral program); or to being a graduated academic. Indeed, given the part time nature of HDR enrolments in Education (80% of doctoral students in Education are P/T), people may be both students and staff at the same time. Also, an additional complication is that academics in one institution may be doctoral students in another. While for most research students, publications arising from their HDR work while enrolled would accrue to the university in which they are enrolled, many in Education would ascribe them to their employing institution. In principle we support highlighting the importance of HDR contributions to research output and excellence but can foresee some practical problems.

Submission, page 13

16. *Institutions are invited to comment on the ease or otherwise of meeting any of the data requirements outlined in this document in addition to the specific questions addressed under particular headings.*

RESPONSE:

Nil

Reporting, pages 14 and 15

17. *We propose there is considerable value in having maximum flexibility and utility with respect to reporting, however, we also recognise the workload involved for institutions in assigning reporting codes. We welcome feedback on this issue in respect to both the feasibility and value of such an approach.*

RESPONSE:

We support ways of reporting that enable interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary fields such as Education to accurately represent their research contributions. Coding research outputs by the academic grouping (School Faculty or Department) could be done easily enough by institutions. Another approach would be to represent research evidence and outputs by collating across relevant FoR codes for interdisciplinary fields such as Education so that all aspects of research excellence could be attributed to one group of researchers.

Examples of Indicators Outputs – Research Training, pages 16 and 17

18. *Institutions are invited to comment on the feasibility or otherwise of institutions identifying student authorship in previous HERDC collections.*

RESPONSE:

Nil response