

Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Initiative

Submission in Response to the *ERA Consultation Paper*

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Responses to questions for discussion

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.

The evaluation of the 2008 clusters of ERA, including their research activity and intensity data, should be collected at the four-digit FoR. This will provide for proper distinction between distinct disciplines.

Philosophy shares a two-digit FOR code with Religious Studies. Yet, as a professional academic discipline, it has nothing more in common with religion than e.g. politics, history, psychology, or medicine. In order to correctly evaluate excellence of research in both philosophy and religious studies, these distinct disciplines need to be distinguished from one another.

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.

It is important to include contributions from honorary and adjunct staff. This should be extended to all publications reported as part of the HERDC, as well

as to grants awarded.

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

Any assessment of quality of philosophical research must take account of the discipline-specific nature of its work (that it has measures of quality different from others) as well as take into account the international dimension of its work, both in its focus and place of output.

International comparison and international peer review, in some areas, will be a better indicator of research quality than citations and research incomes. For example, the quality of Australian philosophy is better evaluated in comparison with philosophical work done overseas (e.g. comparisons with EU, UK, and NZ quality assessment processes, ranking of journals, etc). (see preamble).

Indicators of research quality which focus on citations and income are unlikely to capture research excellence in philosophy. As the answers to questions 9 & 13 outline below, mechanised citation analyses do not collect citations in monographs (and many philosophy journals do not publish citation analyses) and traditionally philosophers have not conducted their research in a way that asks for large amounts of money.

Further indicators of research quality include:

- Memberships on editorial boards of journals of international standing
- Invitations to present plenary addresses at international conferences.
- The award of prizes (such as the Eureka prize for research in ethics)
- Translation of books, chapters and articles into other languages
- Selection of chapters or articles for translation into other languages
- Inclusion of journal articles and book chapters in edited collections by others.

Each of these could easily be included in research data collection.

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?

In order to properly recognise the interdisciplinary nature of philosophical research, the ERA framework should recognise that research outputs may be evaluated both as philosophical research and as having significance in

shaping emerging scientific or applied research. Therefore coding of research outputs needs to allow for work to be counted (non-exclusively) in a range of different disciplines.

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

It is practical and important to request numbers of successful grants in addition to research income and publication data - the ARC reports this information on its web site; the AAP also collects its own information on the numbers of ARC (and other significant) grants held by the discipline.

In assessing research intensity, it is important to report on the number of successful grants (rather than relying solely on the total income), in a discipline which does not normally involve expensive equipment or field-trips. Research grants successes are an indicator of peer recognition of both the researchers' track record for high quality research publications and the theoretical rationale for the project in light of current philosophical debates. It is important to also collect data on the number of collaborators involved in successful grants.

Historically, research in philosophy has been the activity of individuals, contemplating complex ideas and honing their research by means of seminar paper discussions: generally philosophers need time, occasionally visits to the archives, and opportunities to discuss their work with others in order to produce important research. The collaborative work of philosophy (reading, listening, discussion and responding) is seldom reflected in grant applications or publications—it is taken as part of the research culture. Significant research grants (leaving aside scholarships or visiting positions) within philosophy have only really become important for the production of high quality research in the past decade or so, as pressure has increased on workloads, increased student loads and reduced access to modest support for seminars, workshops or conference travel. As a result some aspects of the research have been shifted into research grants to fund research assistants, postgraduates or research fellows, and the costs of bringing researchers together for collaboration and discussion. Also, having some input from numbers of successful grants count towards research success would help rectify the fact that the sciences can legitimately demand far more money than the arts. Alternatively, there should be bands with less income counting for more in different disciplines.

In the evaluation of numbers of research grants in philosophy it is imperative to include research grants involving philosophers but not coded to philosophy. This is particularly evident in the areas on History and Philosophy of Science, political philosophy published under political science and work by philosophers in cognitive science coded to cognitive science. (See preamble).

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.

For the discipline of philosophy it is extremely important that books are included as publication type. Revision and new editions of a book is a good measure of perceived research quality and should be counted in some way. Further, edited books and book chapters can also make a significant contribution to research and should be given some weighting. Tiered rankings of publishers for books, edited collections and chapters of books would allow comparability between publication-types.

Translation of academic and historical texts should also be counted as research, at least in some cases. This is an under-appreciated area which contributes significantly to the research community by making texts and results more widely available and which itself requires considerable research to be achieved.

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

Approach (2), i.e. attribution of research to the institution in which it was conducted, is preferable. Institutions that invest in research and provide environments for its production, e.g. via post-docs, help to shape the research itself and should have their contribution recognised.

Approach (2) may also guard against 'poaching' as was identified in UK initiative, where institutions were awarded research points for work carried out by staff who had been employed elsewhere.

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

In evaluating the discipline of philosophy it is important to recognise that citations (as collected by citation indices) are generally not a good indicator of research quality. The use of citation data suppliers alone will not act as a measure of quality, because most mechanised citation analyses do not

pick up citations in philosophical journals or books.

High quality philosophical work appears in specialist edited collections or monographs, for which citation information is rarely collected (although publishers may be tiered). Whilst some philosophical journals (often journals in the area of applied ethics) publish citation indices, much of the research in philosophy does not appear in journals that report citation rates.

Given that a sign of high influence of either a philosophy article or a monograph within the discipline is its citation in other philosophy monographs, book chapters and articles, the use of citation analyses, irrespective of the data supplier (at present) will fail to indicate quality of research in philosophy.

If citations are to be used for evaluation of those areas where some data is available, it should not serve as the sole measure (and citation rates should, if used, be assessed relative to the discipline). A combination of journal or publisher ranking (within tiers), citations and peer review may be necessary to capture research quality in philosophy.

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

It is both possible and desirable to provide HDR completions data retrospectively at the four digit FoR level in philosophy.

More broadly the ERA framework might consider introducing indicators which are not purely quantitative. A significant measure of research training quality is the subsequent employment of students in academic and research posts in Australia or overseas. While it may not be possible to track all postgraduates successfully employed as a result of research training, tracking those employed within five years of graduation may be feasible.

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

In principle the tagging of research outputs as produced by HDR students seems worthwhile, and a measure of training quality.