

Annex A

Consultation response form for the Research Excellence Framework

1. Respondents should complete the form below.
2. Responses should be e-mailed to refconsultation@hefce.ac.uk by **Thursday 14 February 2008**. HEIs in Northern Ireland should send a copy of their response to research.branch@delni.gov.uk
3. Institutions wishing to express an interest in taking part in the pilot of the bibliometrics indicator should e-mail their details to refconsultation@hefce.ac.uk by Thursday 31 January 2008.
4. We will publish an analysis of responses to the consultation. Additionally, all responses may be disclosed on request, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. The Act gives a public right of access to any information held by a public authority, in this case HEFCE. This includes information provided in response to a consultation. We have a responsibility to decide whether any responses, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. We can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. This means responses to this consultation are unlikely to be treated as confidential except in very particular circumstances. Further information about the Act is available at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk.

Respondent's details

Are you responding: On behalf of an organisation
(Delete one)

Name of responding organisation/individual Council for Higher Education in Art & Design (CHEAD)

Contact name Christoph Raatz

Position within organisation (if applicable) Executive Secretary

Contact telephone number 020 7387 2134

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Consultation questions

The move towards a proposed split model into science and non-science subject areas has a number of possible implications – primarily the separation between perceived elite ‘rich’ science and technology subjects and financially weaker arts and humanities based areas. This type of division would undermine the value and importance of arts research within industry, commerce and the wider cultural arena and would have a significant negative impact on the overall profile of research within society. It could also be seen to undermine current trends towards greater funding for inter-disciplinary research. Furthermore, arts research contributes to built and visual environments, real and virtual worlds, pasts presents and futures. It is important at this stage to be presented with a clear and unambiguous statement regarding the Research Excellence Framework and an assurance that any perceived division would not indeed be implemented.

The HEFCE Consultation indicates the non science-based area will have more than the six science subjects but less than RAE 2008. However, there is no indication of subject grouping at this stage. In consideration of the diverse and complex nature of the RAE 2008 Unit 63 Art and Design it would be important this unit remain as a single entity. However, there may be opportunities to reclassify the sub-elements to include areas like film and architecture. There are also issues in relation to the emergence and continued support of Pedagogic Research. Considerable effort has been made to ensure PedR is identified and will be accounted for in RAE08. It would be disappointing to see this lost just at the point where a synthesis is being more clearly made between this research and its users and consumers, particularly industry, non-commercial sectors and sector agencies.

In relation to non science-based subjects there is a need to clarify what ‘light touch’ peer review and user value mean in relation to the arts and humanities, especially given the very diverse forms of research output in Art and Design, e.g. practice-based / non-text based research. Although the term “light touch” is well understood in the context of the previous RAE regime, it would be unwise to continue use of the term beyond the present debate as it may be read as “less rigorous” by future audiences.

Similarly, the use of quantitative indicators based on bibliometrics may show efficiency but does not indicate effectiveness, quality or innovation. This approach will work in favour of easily categorised research returns but does not take cognisance of cutting edge multidisciplinary approaches to research, which frequently involve artists and designers. Although problems clearly exist in relation to the diverse research outputs which exist in art and design, nonetheless there is a necessity to provide an appropriate system which accurately captures the unit’s character.

The bibliometric system does not take cognisance of shared projects or authorship and it appears to strongly favour single authored papers. It is not clear though how research that falls outside the science model of peer review, such as works of art, designs, contributions to public policy etc. could be measured and assessed.

A longer period for research assessment of up to 10 years may allow for a greater emphasis on the development of research projects/initiatives, however there may be disadvantages for early career researchers and those taking career breaks.

In relation to research income and student numbers CHEAD wishes to highlight the lower levels of grant funding normally allocated to many of the arts disciplines. Furthermore, there are implications for artists and designers who contribute to (but do not lead) larger commercial research projects and are therefore normally unnamed partners.

Key areas for consideration are the status of practice-based research and the methods for measuring new ways of developing research, quality and innovation. Similarly, it is important to look at how these areas are assessed and how and by whom this process is undertaken. There is also an issue in relation to 'light touch peer review' and quality, perception, robustness, and funding. However, CHEAD does recognise the necessity to review the entire process but would like to see how this could be done with an equal emphasis on quantitative AND qualitative measures of research quality. The apparent emphasis on science-based research leaves a lot unanswered in the area of art and design in relation to methods and measurement.

Council for Higher Education in Art & Design (CHEAD)
February 2008

(Boxes for responses can be expanded to the desired length.)

Consultation question 1a: Do you endorse our proposals for defining the broad group of science-based disciplines, and for dividing this into six main subject groups, in the context of our new approach to assessment and funding?

n/a

Consultation question 1b: Are there issues in relation to specific disciplines within this framework that we should consider?

How will REF deal with the very diverse contexts and outputs of Art and Design research, including practice-based and inter-disciplinary research?

Consultation question 2a: Do you agree that bibliometric indicators produced on the basis that we propose can provide a robust quality indicator in the context of our framework?

No. They are not appropriate for measuring new ways of developing research, quality, or innovation in art and design.

Consultation question 2b: Are there particular issues of significance needing to be resolved that we have not highlighted?

The assessment of non-text based research.
The role of practice-based research
The nature of expert panels for arts/humanities subjects

Consultation question 3a: What are the key issues that we should consider in developing light touch peer review for the non science-based disciplines?

'Light touch peer review' in relation to quality, perception, robustness, and funding.
How is user value measured in art and design?

Consultation question 3b: What are the main options for the form and conduct of this review?

To fully review the entire process – in its constitution, methods and appropriateness.

Consultation question 4: Is there additional quantitative information that we should use in the assessment and funding framework to capture user value or the quality of applied research, or other key aspects of research excellence? Please be specific in terms of what the information is, what essential element of research it casts light on, how it may be found or collected, and where and how it might be used within the framework.

It would be important to use a quantitative framework to measure the breadth and extent of qualitative research – users, collation methods, and dissemination.

Consultation question 5: Are our proposals for the role of expert panels workable within the framework? Are there other key issues on which we might take their advice?

The expert panel for non science-based subjects is unclear. Also, the effect of art and design research on broad constituencies is not easily measurable and in many ways is bespoke.

Consultation question 6: Are there significant implications for the burden on the sector of implementing our new framework that we have not identified? What more can we do to minimise the burden as we introduce the new arrangements?

The apparent concentration on science-based research areas indicates that focus has not yet been placed on art and design subject areas.

Consultation question 7: Do you consider that the proposals in this document are likely to have any negative impact on equal opportunities? What issues will we need to pay particular attention to?

Bibliometrics could disadvantage a broad constituency of research active academics – particularly those in early career and others who have had significant diversions through maternity and other reasons.

Consultation question 8: Do you have any other comments about our proposals, which are not covered by the above questions?