

## **Collation of responses from CHEAD members to Science and Innovation Framework 2004-2014 document 'Next Steps'.**

### **Response**

Whilst we have some considerable concerns about the proposals presented in Science and Innovation Framework 2004-2014 document 'Next Steps', we welcome the reports acknowledgment that the creative arts and humanities would be disadvantaged by a metrics based assessment process, and the opportunity for the sector to help develop a system specifically tailored for the arts and humanities, which would benefit the long term sustainability of our research. We also welcome the report's commitment to the dual funding mechanism but are concerned that if research income is adopted as a key metric in the assessment of research quality, then the distinct QR and RC streams will in effect be collapsed.

### **Role of Metrics in Assessing Research Quality**

The role of metrics in the evaluation of research, especially those that emphasise income, is of particular concern. It is likely that the proposed 'shadow metrics exercise' run alongside the peer review assessment in 2008, will validate many of the arguments the sector presented to the Roberts Review in relation to peer review/metrics. A strong correlation between research income and research quality would undoubtedly damage research in the arts and humanities. The decision by the relevant 2008 RAE Panels to emphasise the assessment of research quality through research output rather than income in the formation of assessment criteria and working methods, reflects the sector view that proxy measures cannot capture the breadth or variety of our research. Research grant income is only a general indicator of originality, significance and rigour and currently does not fully reflect the volume and quality of research activity.

Other metric measures, e.g. citation and research student numbers, are equally problematic for disciplines (often emergent) where high quality research is disseminated in many ways, hence the extensive list identifying forms of output the Panel O working methods. The advantage of peer review is that it responds to the variety and distinctiveness of research outcomes in subjects such as art, design, architecture and media and communication, which are inherently practice-based. In addition, it encourages and promotes interdisciplinary research, a key priority for OST and DTI, through qualitative rather than quantitative evaluation.

The process of peer review is fundamental to the long-term sustainability of research excellence in creative arts related subjects. Peer review not only evaluates the quality of research it also enhances the status and credibility of our

subjects. The use of metrics will always be a proxy measure, which has already demonstrated significant disadvantages for specialist subjects through HEIF3, due to the limitations of any suitable indicators which are able to distinguish between volume and quality, or indeed outcomes and impact.

## **Interdisciplinary Research**

We welcome the statement that 'the Government is keen to ensure that excellent research of all types is rewarded, including user-focused and interdisciplinary research'.

However, we would completely disagree with the statement in section 4.7 that 'the peer review process is silo-driven and has, in the past, failed to capture fully the value of interdisciplinary research'. This statement fails to recognise both the refinements made within the RAE since 2001, through the introduction of overarching Main Panels, and indeed the ability of the peer review process to evaluate the 'tonal' quality of research across subject boundaries. Such a suggestion provides further evidence that the use of metrics poses fundamental problems in respect of interdisciplinary research and could undermine the sector's ability to maintain and enhance world leading research. A shift to citation/income metrics could discourage inter-disciplinary research, particularly between art and science. Science colleagues may be unwilling to collaborate with the Arts, as outputs won't easily map their metric requirements. Additionally there is a danger that speculative research, that might seem irrelevant to the primary research funders, will be marginalised if it cannot attract external funding.

We are already disadvantaged in relation to the other research councils. The AHRC will receive less than 3.5% of the total allocations of research council funding in 2006-07. Therefore the use of research income as a measure cannot be viewed as being either equitable or fair and would automatically lead to our subjects being financially disadvantaged.

In addition, the effectiveness and efficiency of the Research Council systems and processes would be put under intense scrutiny (and increased pressure from applications) as the systems and processes employed would need to be robust enough to justify not only direct funding allocations but, by implication, also indirect QR allocations. Would the financial burden of Peer Review simply shift from the RAE to the Research Councils as Universities prioritise additional grant applications?

## **Conclusion**

We are committed to the retention of Peer Review as essential to assessing the quality of research in the creative disciplines. Failure to understand the diversity

and variety of research in creative arts disciplines could seriously jeopardise the future sustainability of research and its continued contribution to growth in the cultural and creative industries. Our ability to invest in infrastructure, develop capacity and emerging researchers, and contribute to the economic and research base is a priority. We therefore welcome the opportunity to contribute to the review and to identify the most appropriate mechanisms to evaluate research quality and to reward research excellence.

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