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*Quality in Educational Research:
Directions in policy and practice*

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The Australian Association for Research in Education



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Directions in Quality and Accessibility

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Content of Presentation

- Research Quality Framework
 - Drivers
 - Key issues
- Accessibility of research
 - drivers
 - key issues
- Where are we up to on development of an RQF
- What is happening on accessibility





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Why do we need a Research Quality Framework (RQF)?

- The Government has decided to develop a Research Quality Framework to measure the *quality and impact* of research in universities and Publicly Funded Research Agencies
- Among the drivers is the need:
 - for greater accountability for public investment in research (value for taxpayer money)
 - to demonstrate the quality and impact of publicly funded research (community confidence).
- Although some indicators of the quality of Australian research exist (eg number of publications) they are not brought together in any readily accessible and consistent way.





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Key issues

- What is quality?
- What is impact?
- How do you deal with cross disciplinary research?
- How do you use existing quality information (eg metrics)?
- To what extent do we need to create new quality information (eg new summative human judgements)?
- How do you reduce all your information to a number?





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Research accessibility drivers

- Some \$5b is expended annually by the Government on research and development
- Is the data produced as accessible and usable as it needs to be?
- Do we have the underpinning infrastructure right?
- Are we getting a good return on investment?





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Key accessibility issues



- Massive amounts of data exist in electronic form
- We face major opportunities and threats
- One threat is the very real fragility of electronic data
- The opportunity is the chance to really connect information
- Within a web services world we can do things which were previously just too hard
 - but it is still not easy



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What's involved?

- Access to major data sets
- Handling data outputs from large research instruments
- Connecting up large numbers of disparate data holdings
 - oceans, geoscience, water, clinical
- Getting better access to highly processed data
 - articles and pre-publication outputs





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Is there a problem?

- A large number of initiatives are in play
- They can be discipline/subject matter based or problem based
- Are the players talking to each other?
 - Are the librarians and grid people talking?
- Are we building multiple unique solutions to universal interoperability?
- Are there common problem spaces and potential common solutions?





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Scholarly outputs issues



- The cost of access to electronic publications
- New methods of scholarly publication
- Scholarly impact occurring before formal publication
- Role of institutional/discipline repositories
- How to populate repositories



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Administrative data issues

- DEST is already moving to collect a large amount of student/course data via web services
- By early next year we will have a good idea on the data needed for a Research Quality Framework
- This will include a lot of metadata about research publications of a kind which could be captured in an institutional research repository
- It will also include data sitting inside an institutional MIS
- Are there synergies with scholarly publication issues?





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Quality and Accessibility

- How can we use developments in research accessibility to minimise data capture costs for a research quality framework?
- How can we use the behavioural impacts flowing from a research quality framework to improve research data accessibility?





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Oversighting the quality process

- Expert Advisory Group (EAG)
- EAG reports to Minister Nelson
- Its Terms of Reference are:
 - Comment on and advise DEST on possible models and measures of research quality
 - Advise on appropriate processes for consultation
 - Prepare preliminary and final advice to the Minister





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ISSUES PAPER FOR THE RESEARCH QUALITY FRAMEWORK: Assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia (March 2005)

**Endorsed for release for public
consultation by the Expert Advisory
Group for the RQF**

13 propositions for consideration



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WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS ON THE RQF ISSUES PAPER



- 165 submissions
- Broad range of stakeholders
- Diverse views expressed
- Discipline-sensitive assessment of research advocated



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CONSULTATION FORUMS ON THE RQF ISSUES PAPER

- Consultations in each capital city
- 370 attendees
- Forums confirmed the diversity of views expressed in written submissions
- Support for inclusion of research training (in some way) within RQF





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ADVANCED APPROACHES PAPER FOR THE RESEARCH QUALITY FRAMEWORK: Assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia (May 2005)

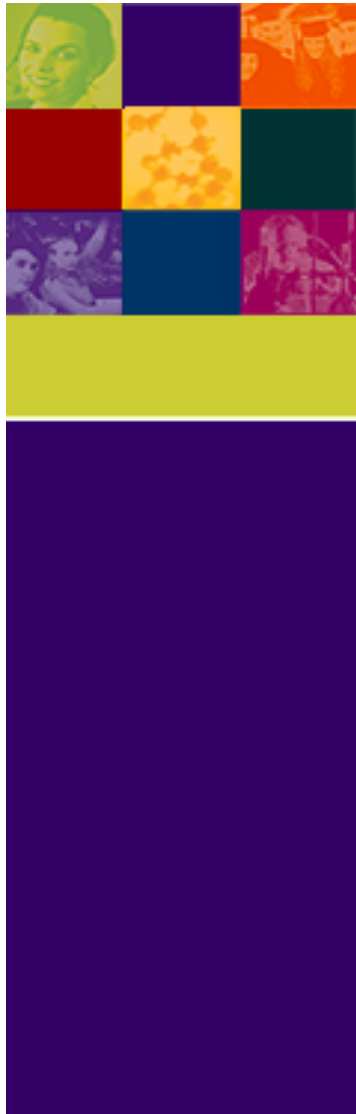
**Endorsed for discussion at the National
Stakeholder Forum, Canberra, 2 June
2005 by the Expert Advisory Group
for the RQF**

10 key design features for discussion



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OUTCOMES OF THE NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER FORUM



- Acceptance by the sector of the RQF.
- Use of a discipline-sensitive graded points system/rating scale.
- Allow comparison between universities and PFRAs, but with separate funding pools.
- Use of strategic planning statements to put research into context.
- Capacity for multi-levels of reporting at higher than Units of Assessment.
- Institutional self-nomination of who is assessed against guidelines.
- Panels to consist of a discipline-selected peer-reviewer majority with appropriate additional expert reviewers.
- Panels to be established on broad-discipline groupings based on aggregations of the ABS RFCDC codes.
- RQF to influence IGS and RTS but not RIBG.
- Focus of RQF to be on research quality whose value would be related to an assessment of its impact.
- Funding distributed by the RQF to flow to institutions for their determination on internal distribution.
- More time to fully develop RQF, but also to report progress/ recommendations to Minister by December 2005.
- Refinement of the details of the RQF model to proceed in 2006, with implementation during 2007.



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NEXT STEPS: TRIALLING



- Establishment of three EAG Working Groups on:
 - Research training
 - Structure of assessment panels and the approach to assessing multidisciplinary research
 - International benchmarking
- Preparation of an “RQF Preferred Models Paper”
- Third EAG Meeting on 19 August 2005
- Modelling of financial effects and reporting requirements



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NEXT STEPS (2)

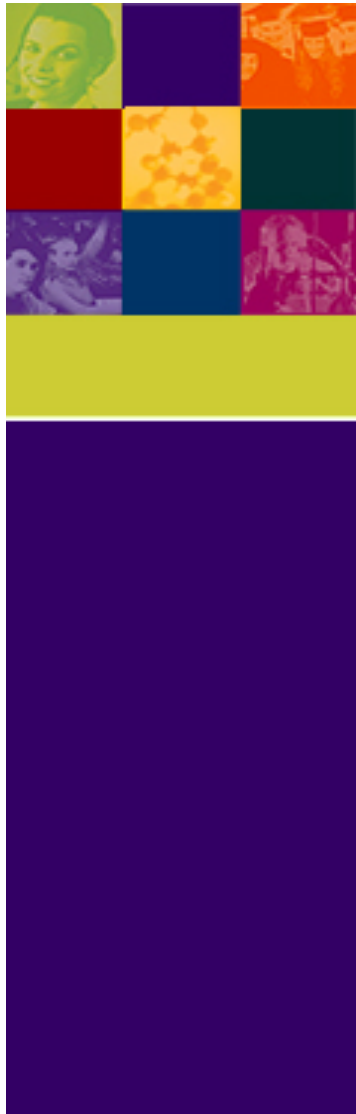
- Advice to Minister by October/
November of 2005
- Possible consideration in 2006-07
budget
- For more information: [http://
www.dest.gov.au/resqual](http://www.dest.gov.au/resqual)





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Oversight of accessibility issues



- The overall question of how we can get better access to research data and outputs of research is looked by the Australian Research Information Infrastructure Committee
 - http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/policies_issues_reviews/key_issues/australian_research_information_infrastructure_committee/default.htm
- How it fits into overall electronic research issues and how much money we will need to spend on infrastructure is being looked at by two committees
 - http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/policies_issues_reviews/key_issues/e_research_consult/e_research_coord_committee.htm
 - http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/policies_issues_reviews/key_issues/ncris/default.htm



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Key projects

- ARROW project is looking into how to create an open source data repository
 - including how to harvest administrative data from Research Master
 - see <http://www.arrow.edu.au>
- APSR is looking at grid issues and data repository issues
 - see <http://www.apsr.edu.au>
 - For grid issues see http://www.apsr.edu.au/events/perspectives_background.html
- How to handle access and authorisation is being looked at by <http://www.melcoe.mq.edu.au/projects/MAMS/>





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What next?

- New call for proposals at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/programmes_funding/programme_categories/research_related_opportunities/systemic_infrastructure_initiative/callforproposals.htm
- Much activity in this area will happen as part of a general effort to respond to the issues of how to conduct research in the electronic age
- But there will also be specific drivers emerging from the research quality exercise





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