



Message from the General Manager

Welcome to the first edition of *ERA News*, a fortnightly newsletter dedicated to keeping you up-to-date with the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative.

ERA is an important Australian Government initiative that will assess the quality of Australian research. Highlighting its importance, last month the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator Kim Carr, announced that the Australian Research Council (ARC) will receive \$35.8 million for ERA in the 2009–10 Budget.



In this edition, the ARC ERA team update you on what's happening with the ERA trial, which officially opened for submission to the Physical, Chemical and Earth Sciences (PCE) Cluster on 1 June.

The current trial is important to ensure that ERA is a robust research evaluation system. The outcomes of the trial will inform the full ERA process in 2010.

In this newsletter, you will also find information about what's happening in the world of indicators and the ARC developed System to Evaluate the Excellence of Research, or as it is better known, SEER.

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In each edition of *ERA News*, we will be highlighting some of the more frequently asked questions of the fortnight. This will let you know what the concerns are among your peers and perhaps provide answers to some of the questions you have been mulling over. Remember, if you have any questions about ERA, please don't hesitate to email us at era@arc.gov.au or phone 02 6287 6755.

I hope you enjoy *ERA News*. The ERA team and I love feedback, so you can let us know what you think by emailing or phoning us on the details listed above. I would like to thank you for your ongoing support with the ERA initiative.

By the way, congratulations to the institution who has submitted, verified and certified (you know who you are! Yay!!).

Happy reading!

Leanne Harvey

Outreach

Liz Visher, Director

On 11 June 2009, I visited the University of Tasmania with the ARC Executive Director of Humanities and the Arts, Professor Andrew Wells. On this visit I gave a presentation to university staff about ERA evaluation.

If you would like someone from the ERA team to give a presentation at your university, please email me at liz.visher@arc.gov.au or phone 02 6287 6665.

Research Evaluation

The ERA Team has recently sent Liaison Officers updates to the ERA–SEER Technical Specifications and ERA–SEER Technology Pack; these updates can all be found on our website.

Other recent updates to the website include a 'new journal form' for requesting consideration of journals to be added or requesting review of a journal ranking in the Physical, Chemical and Earth Sciences (PCE) or Humanities and Creative Arts (HCA) Journal Lists.

Also part of the recent updates have been additional key documents, including the *ERA–SEER Business Rules for PCE Submissions*, *ERA–SEER Technical FAQ*, *ERA–SEER Application Help*, and our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are also being updated regularly.

Your questions

The most commonly asked questions coming into the ERA Helpdesk recently have been technical questions relating to the uploading and verification of PCE submissions in SEER. These include:

- How do I submit Category 1 income?
- How do I submit non-Category 1 income?
- How do I report a nil value for FTE?
- What does the 'namespace error' mean?

All of these questions and more are answered (with xml examples where appropriate) in the most recent update of our Technical FAQ, which can be found on the ERA website.

If you have a question about ERA that is not in our FAQ, please email era@arc.gov.au or phone 02 6287 6755 and we will be happy to help you.

All of this information can be found on our website
<http://www.arc.gov.au/era/default.htm>

Research Performance Analysis

Indicators

It has been a busy time for the team, preparing for the forthcoming trial clusters. We are certainly heartened with the response from the sector to the trial suite of indicators to be used in 2009.

Shortly, our work will shift its focus to look at how well the 2009 indicator suite is performing, and how things can be improved for the 2010 full evaluation.

As you know, in developing the 2009 indicator suite, the ARC chose a fairly broad set of indicators, allowing us to test how these indicators are used by the Research Evaluation Committees (RECs), how volume affects the indicators, and how easy the indicators are for the sector to derive.

In this edition of *ERA News*, I would like to talk about two of the key publication indicators, and how these will be used in the 2009 trial, as well as the steps towards 2010.

Ranked outlets

Ranked journals is a new indicator to research quality metrics, and has created much discussion both in Australia and overseas. The ranked journal lists have three functions in ERA. The first role is to determine the set of eligible journals for each cluster. This ensures that journal articles submitted to each cluster are relevant to the subject matter of the cluster, and therefore to the REC. Journals are assigned to up to three Field of Research (FoR) codes which, in turn, determines the relevant cluster. When a journal article is submitted to the ARC, it is assigned to each FoR that the journal is tagged to. The journal article is counted as a whole in each FoR.

The second role allows the ARC to use FoR assignments to create FoR specific citation benchmarks (for relevant disciplines). For this reason, it is important to keep the FoR assignments accurate. For example, mathematics FoR would artificially raise the benchmark for pure mathematics due to the higher citing behaviours seen in physics.

The third role is the ranking. The ARC uses a journal's ranking to assign journal articles into one of four quality tiers.

Looking towards the full 2010 evaluation, the ARC will be conducting a small review of the PCE and HCA journals to correct any errors or abnormalities in the lists. We welcome your feedback on the current PCE and HCA lists at any time by emailing era@arc.gov.au. We have also posted a 'new journal' form on the website, which helps us to collect the relevant information for each journal. See the ERA [Journal lists](#) web page for more information.

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We continue to finalise journals for the non-trial clusters, and appreciate the input many academics are providing in finalising these lists. See the ERA [Finalising the ranked journal list](#) web page for more information.

Citation analysis

As you will already know, Scopus is the citation provider for the 2009 PCE trial evaluation. We are currently working closely with Scopus to finalise the FoR specific benchmarks for the trial PCE Cluster. The ARC will return these to submitting institutions following the trial, along with the static citations per paper for each article.

You might be interested in having a look at a recent presentation Andrew Calder made at a research quality metrics conference in Brisbane. See the ARC [Presentations](#) web page.

Thanks to all those who submitted journal articles to Scopus to be tagged with EID codes. This process has now been completed, with some 27 000 journal articles submitted to Scopus and tagged. We had positive feedback from many institutions regarding the ease of this process and the accuracy of the tagging.

We are also working with Scopus to determine the cited references for each multidisciplinary and two-digit assigned journal article. The ARC will use cited references to determine the most appropriate FoR assignments for each article.

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Work has also begun to determine the citation provider(s) for the 2010 evaluation. The ARC is examining a range of criteria to determine the best provider for each discipline. We will announce the successful provider(s) later in 2009.

SEER

On the weekend of 30–31 May, the SEER Development Team released Cluster One (Physical, Chemical and Earth Sciences) trial submission functionality. This enabled SEER to open for your submissions on 1 June.

The release is one of many SEER developments scheduled this year to support ERA submission, bibliometrics, assessment, evaluation and outcome reporting. A component of the submission release was the completion of the new SEER server hardware environment.

Work is now well underway on the next SEER release (bibliometric functionality) which is due for completion in mid-June. This will include analysis and development on indicator algorithms to support ranked outlet journals and citation analysis. In addition, analysis has commenced for the evaluation release.

Although much of the SEER functionality being developed in upcoming releases supports ARC 'back-end' processing, work has also commenced on user interfaces for external assessors for the Cluster Two (Humanities and Creative Arts) trial submissions.

The SEER FAQ page at <http://www.arc.gov.au/era/SEER.htm> on the ARC website is an important source of information for ERA Liaison Officers. We will continue to update this page as required. If you have further SEER questions, please email era@arc.gov.au or phone 02 6287 6755.