Excellence in Research for Australia

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Objectives of ERA

- Establish an **evaluation framework** that gives government, industry, business and the wider community assurance of the excellence of research conducted in Australia’s institutions;

- Provide a **national stocktake** of discipline-level areas of research strength and areas where there is opportunity for development in Australia’s higher education institutions;

- Identify **excellence** across the full spectrum of research performance;

- Identify **emerging research areas** and opportunities for further development;

- Allow for **comparison** of Australia’s research nationally and **internationally** for all discipline areas.
General ERA Principles

1. Unit of Evaluation is the four-digit ANZSRC Field of Research code (ie. 157 possible Units of Evaluation); evaluation occurs at the two-digit level too.

2. Evaluation by Research Evaluation Committees in discipline clusters; Eight Clusters in total.

3. There is a minimum level of output to be considered ‘research active’ for evaluation in ERA.


5. Some peer review of outputs accessed through institutional repositories in some Clusters.
## The ERA Clusters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Physical, Chemical &amp; Earth Sciences</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
<td>Humanities and Creative Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 3</td>
<td>Engineering and Environmental Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 4</td>
<td>Social, Behavioural and Economic Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 5</td>
<td>Mathematics, Information and Computing Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 6</td>
<td>Biological and Biotechnological Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 7</td>
<td>Biomedical and Clinical Health Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 8</td>
<td>Public and Allied Health Sciences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ERA Unit of Evaluation

- The **baseline** - the Discipline in an institution = Four-digit Field of Research Code (ANZSRC) eg., 2101 Archaeology
- The **higher perspective** – the division in an institution = Two-digit Field of Research Code (ANZSRC) eg., 21 History and Archaeology
- The ERA Unit is **not** the department nor the individual researcher
ERA Process Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metrics Profile 1</th>
<th>Metrics Profile 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metrics Profile 3</td>
<td>Metrics Profile 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metrics Profile 5</td>
<td>Metrics Profile 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peer Review (if included)

Note - There are no weightings

Research Evaluation Committee

Final report
A quick history of ERA

- Consultation 2008–2010
- Trial for 2009
- ERA – the future
Consultation – 2008 -2010

• Metrics methodology – expert committees
• Discipline-specific indicators
• Ranked journals and conferences
• Esteem measures
• Advice from the Research Evaluation Committees and peer reviewers who participated in the trial
• Sector feedback
Why the ERA Trial in 2009?

• Testing the methodologies
• Two clusters were selected for trial
  ➢ PCE - metrics based
  ➢ HCA - combination of metrics and peer review
• Trial RECs formed
  – HCA chaired by Professor Graeme Turner from the University of Queensland (22 members)
  – PCE chaired by Professor Mark von Itzstein from Griffith University (17 members)
Summary of the 2009 Trial Submissions

• **Cluster 1** (Physical, Chemical and Earth Sciences)
  – 39 out of 41 institutions submitted data
  – Just over 40,000 research outputs were submitted

• **Cluster 2** (Humanities and Creative Arts)
  – All 41 institutions submitted data
  – Just over 47,000 research outputs were submitted including **7,000** creative works
Indicators for 2009 Trial

• Volume and Activity
  – Profiles showing research outputs and staffing

• Citation Analysis (PCE)
  – Relative Citation Impact (RCI) against world and Australian institution benchmarks.

• Peer Review (HCA)

• Ranked Journals

• Research Income
  – Broken down into categories and profiled against field average benchmarks using full-time equivalent (FTE) staff numbers

• Applied
  – Patents sealed & Commercialisation income
What was reported from the Trial?

- **Institution reports** (only to each institution):
  - Ratings for each assessable Unit of Evaluation, plus Committee comments
  - Feedback to institutions about their submission, repositories, data integrity etc.

- **National report** on the ARC website
The interpretation of the Rating Scale for the 2009 Trial – PCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Exceptional quality research outputs <em>consistently and substantially exceeding world performance</em> in this Field of Research. The Unit of Evaluation profile is characterised by evidence of outstanding performance presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation. The research outputs demonstrate the highest standards of quality and scholarly impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Very high quality research outputs <em>consistently exceeding world performance</em> in this Field of Research. The Unit of Evaluation profile is characterised by evidence of excellent performance presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation. The research outputs have made several major international contributions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>High quality research outputs <em>generally exceeding world performance</em> in this Field of Research. The Unit of Evaluation profile is characterised by evidence of above average performance presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Research outputs <em>commensurate with world performance</em> in this Field of Research. The Unit of Evaluation profile is characterised by evidence of world average performance presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Research outputs generally <em>below world performance</em> in this Field of Research. The Unit of Evaluation profile is characterised by evidence of below average performance presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some general issues from the Trial

- Data integrity and validation
  - No FTE data
  - No information about authors, or partial author lists
  - No Background Statement or incomplete
  - Incomplete Research Statements
  - Duplication of some output data
  - Incorrect EID tagging of outputs
- Does the output really meet the ERA definition of research?
- Repository access and access to non-repository items for peer review
Low Volume Thresholds

• For disciplines where citation analysis is used:
  – 50 or more indexed journal articles

• For disciplines where peer review is used:
  – ERA Trial: 20 or more outputs
  – ERA commencing in 2010: threshold raised to 30 outputs

• In cases of low volume at the four-digit level, analysis can still occur at the two-digit level if it reaches the threshold.

• Note books weighted 5:1 for threshold calculation, not for evaluation
Low volume scenarios

Which one needs a Background Statement?

Both.
Addressing the issues from the Trial

- ‘Soft close’ for submission to allow time to correct errors in 2010
- Sneak peek – plans for an early Dashboard
- Portfolios – eg non-traditional outputs, with attached research statement
- Apportionment – outputs apportioned by institutions into FoR codes up to 100%
- Peer review – institutions able to nominate preferred FoR in which output is to be reviewed
- Research statements will remain at 250 words
ERA – What’s ahead?

• Submission Guidelines and Technical Specifications were released in December 2009
• The full list of ranked journals and conferences is out now
• ERA Submissions open 1 June 2010
• ARC has to:
  ➢ Work with institutions on repositories
  ➢ Set up eight committees and identify pool of peer reviewers
  ➢ Do further system development (SEER)
  ➢ Conduct the full ERA process commencing in 2010 – all eight clusters evaluated simultaneously
## The New Rating Scale

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Unit of Evaluation profile is characterised by evidence of outstanding performance <strong>well above world standard</strong> presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Unit of Evaluation profile is characterised by evidence of performance <strong>above world standard</strong> presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Unit of Evaluation profile is characterised by evidence of average performance <strong>at world standard</strong> presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Unit of Evaluation profile is characterised by evidence of performance <strong>below world standard</strong> presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Unit of Evaluation profile is characterised by evidence of performance <strong>well below world standard</strong> presented by the suite of indicators used for evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Not assessed due to low volume. The number of research outputs does not meet the volume threshold standard for evaluation in ERA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Peer Review

• Peer review will be used for some disciplines
• In 2010 peer review is identified as an indicator for HCA, SBE, parts of EE and MIC
• Peer review is only one “indicator” on the Dashboard
• Institutions identify 20% of outputs for the peer review pool – best works for the discipline
• REC Members undertake expert review of the Dashboard including peer review of research outputs.
• Peer Reviewers only evaluate research quality based on peer review outputs, and their reports go back to REC Members
• No ratings on individual research outputs
Repositories

• Peer Review requires access to range of research outputs via Institutional Repositories or as non-repository items
• For Creative Works, you need a Research Statement
• Portfolios – the sum of creative works, you also need a Research Statement for the Portfolio
• Multiple copies of research outputs if a non-repository item. Also new arrangements for books.
• Trial was very useful to identify key issues; the ARC is working with institutions to test and improve repository access for 2010.
Esteem Indicators

• Consultation on esteem was undertaken
• A proxy for quality that is well understood
• There is a limited list of esteem indicators addressed in Submission Guidelines for the ERA process commencing in 2010
• It is shown as a metric profile – no information on individuals
Mythbusting - Ranked Outlets

• Only one of a number of unweighted indicators on the “Dashboard”
• Ranked Journals required for development of discipline-specific benchmarks for citation analysis
• Ranked conference essential for IT, Engineering & built Environment
• Note discipline-specific practices
Developing the ranked journal list

Initial development by Learned Academies and Peak bodies

Public consultation (June-Aug 2008)

Expert Review of the public feedback

Omitted journal public feedback (Aug-Nov 2009)

Final expert review of consolidated list (Dec 2009 – Jan 2010)
Parameters for inclusion in the lists

- academic/scholarly
- publishes original research
- peer reviewed or equivalent process
- active during the ERA reference period (2003-2008)
- has an ISSN
- able to withstand international scrutiny
Tier Descriptors

**A**
Typically an A* journal would be one of the best in its field or subfield in which to publish and would typically cover the entire field/subfield. Virtually all papers they publish will be of a very high quality. These are journals where most of the work is important (it will really shape the field) and where researchers boast about getting accepted. Acceptance rates would typically be low and the editorial board would be dominated by field leaders, including many from top institutions.

**A**
The majority of papers in a Tier A journal will be of very high quality. Publishing in an A journal would enhance the author’s standing, showing they have real engagement with the global research community and that they have something to say about problems of some significance. Typical signs of an A journal are low acceptance rates and an editorial board which includes a reasonable fraction of well known researchers from top institutions.

**B**
Tier B covers journals with a solid, though not outstanding, reputation. Generally, in a Tier B journal, one would expect only a few papers of very high quality. They are often important outlets for the work of PhD students and early career researchers. Typical examples would be regional journals with high acceptance rates, and editorial boards that have few leading researchers from top international institutions.

**C**
Tier C includes quality, peer reviewed, journals that do not meet the criteria of the higher tiers.
The 2010 Ranked Outlet Lists

• The 2010 lists are fixed for this ERA evaluation

• ERA 2010 Ranked Journal List
  – 20,712 journals included
  – Over 88% agreement on ranks and FoR
  – 252 added and 145 removed (from 17 December list)

• ERA 2010 Ranked Conference List
  – 1,952 conferences included
  – 62 added and 98 removed (from 17 December list)
# Proportions of journals at each tier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Number of journals</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A*</td>
<td>1,030</td>
<td>4.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3,054</td>
<td>14.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5,667</td>
<td>27.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>10,682</td>
<td>51.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unranked (started 2008)</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>1.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20,712</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maintaining ranked outlets

- The ARC will continue to accept feedback regarding new and ceased journals/conferences and will record this in the database.

- List would be updated and reviewed prior to any future ERA round.

- What can be done to improve a rank?
Further information?

- www.arc.gov.au/era
- Email: era@arc.gov.au
- Hotline: 02 6287 6755