

#157

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Page 1: Personal Details

Q1

Your name

University employee Jim Lewis

Q2

Respondent skipped this question

Your organisation (leave blank if not applicable)

Q3

This submission reflects my personal views and not those of my organisation

Are you making this submission on behalf of your organisation?

Q4

Email address

jimlewishfc73@gmail.com

Q5

I work at an Australian university

What best describes your interest in making a submission?

Q6

Respondent skipped this question

Submissions may be made public unless you request otherwise.

Q7

Provide my responses through the online survey

What form of submission do you wish to make?

Page 2: Upload Response

Q8

Respondent skipped this question

Please upload your submission.

Page 3: ERA and/or EI choice

Q9

I want to answer questions on both ERA and EI

Please indicate whether you wish to answer questions on ERA and/or EI.

Page 4: ERA Policy /1

Q10

To what extent is ERA meeting its objectives to:

Continue to develop and maintain an evaluation framework that gives government, industry, business and the wider community assurance of the excellence of research conducted in Australian higher education institutions.

A moderate amount

Provide a national stocktake of discipline level areas of research strength and areas where there is opportunity for development in Australian higher education institutions.

A moderate amount

Identify excellence across the full spectrum of research performance.

A moderate amount

Identify emerging research areas and opportunities for further development.

Not at all

Comment:

It is a retrospective and backward facing exercise

Allow for comparisons of research in Australia, nationally and internationally, for all discipline areas.

A small amount

Comment:

Only allows a national comparison

Q11

The ERA objectives are appropriate for meeting the future needs of its stakeholders.

Disagree,

If you disagreed with the above statement, please explain your answer.:

Again, the exercise is backward facing.

Page 5: ERA Policy /2

Q12

What impact has ERA had on:

the Australian university research sector as a whole

A lot of work and some perverse behaviours (see particular Universities taking out adds to brag about ERA results)

individual universities

Not much

researchers

Added pressure

Q13**Respondent skipped this question**

How do you, or your organisation use ERA outcomes?

Q14**Neither agree nor disagree**

ERA outcomes are valuable to you or your organisation.

Q15

How else could ERA outcomes be used?

To take a stockpile overall of the strengths of Australian universities. Too often ERA ends up being a league table which is not in the best interest of the sector per se.

Page 6: ERA Methodology /1

Q16**Neither agree nor disagree**

The current methodology meets the objectives of ERA.

Q17

What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of the overall ERA methodology?

Strengths

It is comprehensive

Weaknesses

It is far too time consuming when other measure and datasources could be used to achieve similar results**Q18**

Does the discipline-specific approach for evaluating research quality (citation analysis or peer review for specific disciplines) continue to enable robust and comparable evaluation across all disciplines?

No - it does not allow comparison across disciplines at all. It is clearly more easy to obtain a rating of five in a peer review FoR than it is in a peer reviewed one. Universities have become very adept at understanding how the citation methodology works.

Q19

The citation analysis methodology for evaluating the quality of research is appropriate.

Agree,

Please explain your answer.:

It is an international standard

Q20

What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of the citation analysis methodology?

Strengths

As per above

Weaknesses

It can be manipulated to achieve results that are not consistent with what is known about the sector. For instance, universities receiving ratings in disciplines for which they have no active researchers

Q21

Can the citation analysis methodology be modified to improve the evaluation process while still adhering to the ERA Indicator Principles?

Yes,

If you answered 'Yes', please describe how the methodology could be improved.:

Standardise the allocation of FoR codes. This could be done via an AI approach. Both Digital Science and Elsevier have or are developing technologies that will do this at the article level.

Q22

The peer review methodology for evaluating the quality of research is appropriate.

Disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

There is too much subjectivity in the peer review process.

Q23

What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of the peer review methodology?

Strengths

It does allow assessment of non traditional research outputs

Weaknesses

Peer reviewers have expressed concerns regarding the workload they are expected to assess and as such look for short cuts (such as using the journal impact factor or publisher) to give an assessment

Q24

Can the peer review methodology be modified to improve the evaluation process while still adhering to the ERA Indicator Principles?

No

Page 7: ERA Methodology /2

Q25

The volume and activity indicators are still relevant to ERA.

Agree

Q26

The publishing profile indicator is still relevant to ERA.

Agree

Q27

The research income indicators are still relevant to ERA.

Agree

Q28

The applied measures are still relevant to ERA.

Patents

Comment:

Strongly disagree

This is not a measure of research excellence

Research commercialisation income

Comment:

Strongly disagree

This is not a measure of research excellence

Registered designs

Comment:

Strongly disagree

This is not a measure of research excellence

Plant breeder's rights

Comment:

Strongly disagree

This is not a measure of research excellence

NHMRC endorsed guidelines

Comment:

Strongly disagree

This is not a measure of research excellence

Page 8: ERA Methodology /3

Q29

The five-band ERA rating scale is suitable for assessing research excellence.

Disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

It is understood by the sector and has been in place for over 10 years

Q30

Noting that 90% of units of evaluation assessed in ERA 2018 are now at or above world standard, does the rating scale need to be modified to identify research excellence?

No

Q31

The ERA low volume threshold is appropriate.

Disagree

Q32

Are there ways in which the low volume threshold could be modified to improve the evaluation process?

Yes. Have different thresholds based on the size of the institution. 50 outputs for an institution with 50,000 outputs is very different to 50 outputs for an institution with 2,000 outputs.

As a suggestion, Go8 Universities could have a threshold of 150, ATNs could have a threshold of 100 and regional/others could stay with the 50. That way smaller institutions are not penalised but larger institutions receiving a rating for an FoR that contributes less than 0.1% of the University's output do not occur.

Q33

What is the more appropriate method for universities to claim research outputs—staff census data or by-line?

By-line,

Please explain your answer.:

Brings in line with International rankings

Q34

What are the limitations of a census date approach?

Excellent research by students, people who have left the country or indeed have passed away is excluded from the analysis

Q35

Yes

Would a by-line approach address these limitations?

Q36

What are the limitations of a by-line approach?

None

Q37

ERA adequately captures and evaluates interdisciplinary research.

Strongly disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

By definition, FoR looks at research within a discipline.

Q38

If you disagreed with the previous statement, how could interdisciplinary research best be accommodated?

It can't and I don't see why this should be the aim of ERA. ERA is meant to understand where the relative strengths by discipline occur within the Australian sector.

Page 9: ERA Methodology /4

Q39

Respondent skipped this question

My institution would meet ERA low volume threshold in Indigenous studies at:

Q40

In ERA, the best approach for evaluating Indigenous Studies is (choose one):

Other (please describe).:

Indigenous codes should be used IN ADDITION to other codes. They should be used to profile the breath and depth of indigenous research across the sector. I don't believe assessing indigenous research as a two digit code should occur given a) the wide variety of disciplines that fall under the two digit code b) requiring researchers in indigenous topics to split their output - this is particularly problematic for citation based disciplines. Why should the citations for a public health paper have to be split just because it focuses on indigenous issues c) there is a very real risk that any assessment could be taken out of context d) how will an assessment panel be convened that will have the full skill set to adequately score and rate research over such a broad disciplinary spread

Q41

What would be the advantages and/or disadvantages of your preferred approach for evaluating Indigenous studies in ERA?

Advantages

It will take care of all of the issues I've described. Use it to profile and to assess.

Page 10: ERA Process /1

Q42

ERA should move to an annual collection of data from universities.

Neither agree nor disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

If there was a return to annual publications collection that informs block grant funding (ala the old HERDC arrangements), then I'd strongly agree. However in the absence of an annual allocation of funds based on publications, I would strongly disagree. Furthermore, ERA would need to be based on by-line affiliation (which I support). The Watt Review unfortunately was incredibly short-sighted in its decision to remove publications from the collection. Spreading out the work would be a better approach but there is absolutely no incentive for universities to engage on annual basis unless there is a tangible benefit. It is also unclear in how both peer review and FoR code allocation would work in such a scenario. Again, AI could be used to allocate FoR codes and peer review could be done randomly by the ARC.

Q43

What would be the advantages and/or disadvantages of an annual data collection.

Advantages

More streamlined.

Disadvantages

Requires publications to be part of the block grant. It would be great though if publications was reintroduced. It gives institutions nice hard deadlines in which to work in.

Q44

In future ERA rounds, should the volume of outputs submitted for each unit of evaluation be published?

Yes,

Please explain your answer.:

It is important to put results in perspective. So a University receiving a rating of five in a discipline with 50 outputs and rating of one in a discipline with 1,000 outputs is not the same as another University receiving a rating of five with 1,000 outputs and a rating of one in a discipline with 50 outputs. Currently ERA treats both as the same.

Q45

In future ERA rounds, research outputs should be published with their assignment to specific disciplines following completion of the round.

Strongly disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

Unless the AI approach is taken, this will only lead to fights between institutions on how research was coded and undermine the integrity of the whole process.

Q46

What would be the advantages and/or disadvantages of publishing research outputs with their assignment to specific disciplines?

Advantages

None

Disadvantages

Fights. Big Fights.

Q47

What other data do you think the ARC should publish following an ERA round? (Note - in ERA 2018 metadata included: Research output title, Research output type, reference year, outlet, publisher, ISBN, ERA round, and Institution)

Respondent skipped this question

Page 11: EI Policy /1

Q48

Considering that EI is a new assessment, to what extent is EI meeting its objectives to:

encourage greater collaboration between universities and research end-users, such as industry, by assessing engagement and impact?

Comment:

Not at all

Engagement and impact occurs whether or not EI exists

provide clarity to the Government and the Australian public about how their investments in university research translate into tangible benefits beyond academia?

Comment:

A small amount

One case study and a narrative is nice but hardly gives a return on investment

identify institutional processes and infrastructure that enable research engagement?

A small amount

promote greater support for the translation of research impact within institutions for the benefit of Australia beyond academia?

A small amount

identify the ways in which institutions currently translate research into impact?

Comment:

A small amount

It could but it needs to be independent of the case study that is submitted. Also most institutions don't have a discipline specific approach to realising impact or engagement.

Page 12: EI Policy /2

Q49**Strongly disagree**

The EI objectives are appropriate for the future needs of its stakeholders.

Q50

What impact has EI had on:

the Australian university research sector as a whole

None

Individual Universities

None

Researchers

None

Other sectors outside of academia?

N/A**Q51**

How do you, or your organisation, use EI outcomes?

I know of no instance where they have been used.

Q52

The EI outcomes are valuable to you or your organisation.

Disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

As above

Q53

How else could EI outcomes be used?

?

Page 13: EI Policy /3

Q54**Neither agree nor disagree**

The current Engagement definition is appropriate.

Q55

The current Impact definition is appropriate.

Strongly disagree,

If you don't agree, what are your suggested amendments to the Impact definition?:

Academia has to be part of the impact process.

Q56

The current end-user definition is appropriate.

Disagree,

If you don't agree, what are your suggested amendments to the end-user definition?:

End user implies that it must be the ultimate user of the research that benefits. I'd much rather see something like "subsequent user"

Q57**Respondent skipped this question**

Are there any end-user categories excluded in the current definition of research end-user that you think should be included? Please explain your answer.

Q58**No**

Are there other key terms that need to be formally defined?

Page 14: EI Methodology /1

Q59**Yes**

Are the two-digit Field of Research codes the most appropriate method to define units of assessment for Engagement and Impact?

Q60**Yes,**

Are there other ways to classify units of assessment in EI, for example SEO codes?

Please explain your answer.:

SEO code could be used but given the ABS decision not to report by SEO code for research expenditure, getting compliance at an SEO level for say, research income will be difficult.

Q61**The same number as in EI 2018**

Should there be more or fewer units of assessment per university?

Q62**Neither agree or disagree**

The EI low-volume threshold should continue to be based on the number of research outputs submitted for ERA.

Q63**Respondent skipped this question**

If you disagree, how should eligibility for assessment in EI be determined?

Q64**Neither agree nor disagree**

The low-volume threshold is set at the appropriate level.

Page 15: EI Methodology /2

Q65**Disagree**

Overall, the engagement indicator suite for the assessment of research engagement is suitable.

Q66

The cash support from research end-users using HERDC data is appropriate for the assessment of research engagement.

Strongly disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

This needs to align with the categories in HERDC. So category 3 would be an appropriate measure of engagement.

Q67

The research commercialisation income is appropriate for the assessment of research engagement.

Strongly disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

Universities can commercialise research independently of any involvement of an external party.

Q68

Are there additional metrics that would be appropriate across many or all disciplines?

Yes,

If you answered 'Yes', please outline the metrics. If you answered 'No', please explain your answer.:

Articles in the Conversation, Altmetric type measures (media mentions, policy documents, etc)

Q69

Are there alternative metrics that would be appropriate across many or all disciplines?

Please specify the metrics.:

See above

Q70

Should any of the current engagement metrics be redesigned?

No**Q71**

The co-supervision of HDR students should be made an engagement indicator in future rounds of EI.

Disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

This discounts the idea that the HDR candidate is the customer. The HDR candidate may not wish to be supervised from someone outside of the University. In fact, in the vast majority of cases they want the expertise of the academic.

Q72

In your opinion, are any of the ERA applied measures appropriate indicators of research engagement in EI?

Patents

Comment:

No

Can be done independently of any engagement

Research commercialisation income

Comment:

No

Can be done independently of any engagement

Registered designs

Comment:

No

Can be done independently of any engagement

Plant breeder's rights

Comment:

No

Can be done independently of any engagement

NHMRC endorsed guidelines

Comment:

No

Can be done independently of any engagement

Page 16: EI Methodology /3

Q73

The narrative approach is suitable for describing and assessing research engagement with end-users.

Agree,

Please explain your answer.:

There is no other tangible way to illustrate engagement.

Q74

If you disagree with the narrative approach, what alternative approach could be used to replace the narrative? If you are suggesting indicators, please be specific.

Respondent skipped this question

Q75

One engagement submission per broad discipline is sufficient for capturing the research engagement within that discipline.

Agree

Q76

The engagement narrative needs to be longer.

Neither agree nor disagree

Q77

Additional evidence is needed within the narrative.

Agree ,

If you agree, what evidence should be provided?:

It would be nice to have a table with say the top 20 bodies the discipline has worked with both in terms of number of projects and value of research.

Page 17: EI Methodology /4

Q78

The narrative approach is suitable for describing and assessing Impact.

Agree

Q79

If you disagree with the narrative approach, what alternative approach could be used to replace the narrative? Please explain your answer. If you are suggesting indicators, please be specific.

Respondent skipped this question

Q80

One impact study per broad discipline is sufficient for capturing the research impact within that discipline.

Disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

One impact case study is just that - one impact case study. However the workload is big enough as it is - I'm advocating for more case studies. I am advocating for a different interpretation of what one case study means.

Q81**Neither agree nor disagree**

The impact narrative needs to be longer.

Q82**Disagree**

There is need for additional evidence to be provided within the impact narrative.

Q83**No**

In your opinion, are there quantitative indicators that could be used to the measure the impact of research outside of academia?

Q84**Respondent skipped this question**

If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, please name and describe the quantitative indicator/s, and the disciplines for which they are relevant.

Page 18: EI Methodology /5

Q85

The narrative approach is suitable for describing and assessing approach to impact.

Agree,

Please explain your answer.:

However it should not be tied to a discipline. There should a university narrative - tying the approach to the case study is restrictive and doesn't necessarily reflect the initiatives that the University has undertaken in this space.

Q86**Respondent skipped this question**

If you disagree with the narrative approach, what alternative approach could be used to replace the narrative? Please explain your answer. If you are suggesting indicators, please be specific.

Q87

One approach to impact narrative per broad discipline is sufficient for capturing the activities within that discipline.

Strongly disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

It should not be tied to discipline. It is not how Universities structure themselves around the impact problem.

Q88**Neither agree nor disagree**

The approach to impact narrative needs to be longer.

Q89**Neither agree nor disagree**

There is a need for additional evidence to be provided.

Q90

Would there be benefit in combining engagement and approach to impact?

No,

Please explain your answer.:

Approach to impact should be independent of discipline

Page 19: EI Methodology /6

Q91

The engagement rating scale is suitable for assessing research engagement.

Strongly disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

All we are showing is whether engagement occurs or whether it does not. It is incredibly subjective and may just reflect how well a narrative is written rather than the actual engagement.

Q92

The descriptors for the engagement rating scale are suitable.

Strongly disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

1) Engagement with a wide range of national and international partners 2) Engagement with a wide range of national partners 3) Engagement with a narrow range of national partners 4) No Engagement

Q93

The impact rating scale is suitable for assessing impact.

Strongly disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

Again,

Q94

The descriptors for the impact rating scale are suitable.

Strongly disagree,

Please explain answer.:

a) Impact on an International level b) Impact on a National level c) No Impact

Q95

The approach to impact rating scale is suitable for assessing approach to impact.

Strongly disagree

Q96

The descriptions for the approach to impact rating scale are suitable.

Strongly disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

Well defined approach to realising impact No defined approach to realising impact

Page 20: EI Methodology /7

Q97

Should EI continue to include an interdisciplinary impact study in addition to the two-digit Field of Research impact studies?

No,

Please explain your answer.:

By definition, all case studies were interdisciplinary (as seen by the allocation of multiple FoR codes). This is not required

Q98

Should the EI low volume threshold be applied to the unit of assessment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research in EI 2024 with the option to opt in if threshold is not met?

No,

Please explain your answer.:
This should be opt in

Q99

Should the unit of assessment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research include engagement in the next round of EI?

Yes

Page 21: Overarching Issues Common to ERA and EI

Q100

How often should ERA occur?

Other (please specify and explain your answer):

Every six years - you could then schedule an assessment every three years alternating between ERA and EI

Q101

What impact would a longer assessment cycle (i.e. greater than three years) have on the value of ERA results, particularly in the intervening years?

A much easier workload for Universities to deal with particularly in a post COVID world

Page 22: Overarching Issues Common to ERA and EI

Q102

How often should the EI assessment occur?

Other (please specify and explain your answer):

Every six years - you could then schedule an assessment every three years alternating between ERA and EI

Q103

What impact would a longer assessment cycle (i.e. greater than three years) have on the value of EI results, particularly in the intervening years?

Much easier in terms of workload. We will not have the staff we once had to pull together both ERA and EI submissions (unless the ARC is looking at re-introducing the IAP scheme).

Page 23: Overarching Issues Common to both ERA and EI

Q104

ERA and EI should be combined into the one assessment.

Strongly disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

As noted alternate the analyses every three years

Q105

What would be the advantages and/or disadvantages of ERA and EI being combined into the one assessment.

Advantages

None

Disadvantages

It would kill the sector in terms of workload

Q106

Are there other ways to streamline the processes to reduce the cost to universities of participating in ERA and EI?

Yes,

Please explain your answer.:

Re-use as much data as possible. For instance, if HERDC research income was aligned with both ERA and EI there would be no need for institutions to resubmit the data as the ARC would already have it. The ARC already has all grant data yet we are required to resubmit it.

Page 24: Overarching Issues Common to Both ERA and EI

Q107

In your view, what data sources could ERA utilise?

SciVal, Altmetric, Dimensions

Q108

In your view, what are the most time consuming elements of the ERA submission?

The creation of the XML in particular data elements that offer no value but take up thousands of rows of data such as the author lists on ATLAS papers. The ARC already has this data from the citation provider - why do institutions have to submit the same data

Q109

Are there efficiencies that could be introduced?

Yes,

Please describe.:

1) Align all reporting requirements (HERDC, ERA, EI) so that the same data can be re-used rather than having to be resubmitted in different forms 2) Use the citation provider to extract metadata. Do not ask institutions to report on data that you already have. It should be enough for the institution to provide the DOI (and maybe a title) 3) Get rid of the place of publication as a required metadata field. It is meaningless. 4) Get rid of the following business rules BR059 (65/35 rule) is arbitrary and bears no resemblance to how researchers code their output. It is also incredibly confusing to explain and generates an error rather than a warning. It doesn't help in any way in terms of appropriately coding research and only served to undermine the trust that academic staff have in the ERA process. BR113 is similar and again bears no relationship to how academics code their research. This also adds a huge additional burden onto universities for no additional value in terms of the assessment. BR104 requiring institutions to list all creators/authors on an output is incredibly time consuming (particularly for large physics and public health papers) and offers no value in terms of the assessment. BR106 should be aligned to how the income is reported in ERA (moreso now that ACGs are reported with codes to the HERDC – the same codes should be used in ERA). Also separating the codes by year when only one code is required to describe the project is not required. BR047 – there are instances where the words “Not available” are legitimate in an ERA context including being part of an explanatory statement. NA is also the chemical symbol for sodium and we did have instances where we received an error message where capitals had been used in output titles. 5) Have one repository for the whole sector rather than 38 points of failure for peer review.

Page 25: Overarching Issues Common to Both ERA and EI

Q110

In your view, what are the most time consuming elements of the EI submission?

Resubmitting HERDC income data

Q111

Are there efficiencies that could be introduced?

Yes,

Please describe.:

Use HERDC data

Page 26: Overarching Issues Common to Both ERA and EI

Q112

ORCID iDs should be mandatory for ERA.

Disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

There will be a much lower level of compliance in non-traditional research areas.

Q113

What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of mandatory ORCID iDs?

Disadvantages

How will FoR codes be assessed?

Q114

The automatic harvesting of output data using ORCID iDs would streamline a university's submission process.

Disagree,

Please explain your answer.:

Non compliance will mean having to figure out which outputs are in an ORCID and which aren't.

Q115

What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of automatic harvesting of output data using ORCID iDs?

Respondent skipped this question

Q116

DOIs should be mandatory for ERA.

Agree,

Please explain your answer.:

Where they actually exist. Yes they should be mandatory and the ARC should then use the DOI to extract all relevant metadata

Q117

What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of mandatory DOIs?

Respondent skipped this question

Page 27: Overarching Issues Common to Both ERA and EI

Q118

Are there other ways to collect data to reduce the cost and burden to universities of participating in ERA and EI whilst maintaining the robustness of the ERA and EI process?

Yes,

Please explain your answer.:

Reuse and recycle as much as possible.

Q119

What are the advantages and/or disadvantages?

Respondent skipped this question

Page 28: Additional Comments

Q120

Please provide any additional comments:

Please ensure people that are at the coalface of ERA and EI are part of the design - and by that I means the admin people who actually pull the ERA and EI university submissions together. Many people have great ideas (both at the ARC and at Universities) which are impractical. ERA can still be of benefit to the sector but it needs to be more light touch given the post COVID world we are entering.

I think the scale of the exercise for large institutions is often lost on a lot of people - the last ERA submission I worked on had over 1.5 million different data points, many of which did not offer an tangible benefit in terms of assessing research. It's a huge task to pull all of that data together.

I would also welcome a return to publications being part of the Research Block Grant. As I noted earlier the Watt Review was incredibly short sighted in removing them as part of the funding formulae. It certainly hasn't made life easier for admin staff at Universities - if anything it has made it harder to ensure compliance with reporting (although we are trying to automatically harvest as much as possible). But once money is tied to an activity is gives it value - if there was a return to HERDC where each output was reported with it's relevant FOR you would be able to streamline the whole process. It would also remove some of the gaming - the ARC might have to expect lower ratings. Or even better go with an AI approach and everyone is then treated in the same manner.
