

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2005-2006 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 3

Output Group: 3.2 – Assistance for science collaboration and innovation

DEST Question No. E285_06

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

1. There have been reports that different models of an RQF will be trialled before settling on the final model. How will the trial RQFs work for research institutions? What will institutions have to do in each trial? How long will they run? How much has been budgeted?
2. Who will the trial apply to? Will all institutions participate in the trials? If not, who will and how will that be determined?
3. What extra funding does DEST expect to provide to run the RQF itself and the RQF models being trialled this year and next? Should funding for administering the RQF be linked as a percentage to the amount of research funding being provided to institutions through an RQF?
4. Is DEST intending to measure or assess research quality separately from assessing research impact or are they going to be treated together? E.g. A good piece of social policy research may save governments a lot of money but impact might be evident over a specific time period. Or high impact research is not necessarily high quality research and vice versa.
5. How will you estimate impact? Over how long a period of time?
6. Will there be a separate weighting or category for assessing capability of research institutions within the RQF so that smaller or newer institutions who want to enhance capability for research can compete with the older more established ones? How will equity, in terms of newer less established researchers, be determined?
7. Currently the RTS and IGS use previous research income as measures of research performances (40% of assessment criteria for the RTS and 60% for IGS). Will the RQF continue this kind of practice?
8. Previous research income is a measure of input in a framework designed to assess outputs. Will RQF as a measure of research output and performance measure purely outputs rather than input measures completely? Why measure inputs at all? Why favour expensive research, i.e. high research grants income for projects, when the point is looking at value for taxpayer money?

Answer:

Questions 1,2

Trialling the Research Quality Framework

Pending further development of the Research Quality Framework (RQF), no decisions have yet been taken on trialling. For details of progress with the development of the RQF see:

<http://www.dest.gov.au/resqual/default.htm> .

Question 3. *Funding*

Funding for the development of the RQF is an element of the \$2.8 million for the Quality and Accessibility Frameworks announced by the Australian Government in the May 2004 Budget. No estimate has been prepared of the costs of operating an RQF at this stage.

Questions 4 and 5

Defining research quality and impact for the RQF

There has been strong support from the university sector for research quality and impact to be assessed together. The quality of research includes its intrinsic merit and academic impact as well as broader impact and relevance. For the purposes of the RQF, research impact is defined in terms of recognising the original work of a researcher as having a demonstrable influence on a specific (or related) discipline area(s) or a demonstrable influence on the wider community through its broader, social, cultural, economic and environmental impact or usefulness.

The issue of how impact will be measured in the RQF is being considered as part of the development process.

Question 6

Equity for institutions and researchers in the RQF

No decision has been taken on this issue

Questions 7 and 8

The use of input metrics in the RQF

Further work is required before the actual details of what metrics, inputs or outputs would be used in the RQF and what format these would take is determined.