

# THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN RESEARCH AND TEACHING

## **ANNEX F**

### **Survey of institutions**

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Forty institutions were invited to complete a questionnaire detailing their institutional policies and practices on the interface between teaching, research and other activities. Thirty-nine responses were received from a cross-section of institutions. Using the typology described in Appendix 1 to the full report, the number of respondents from each category was:

Group A: Research-led	4
Group B: High volume of research	8
Group C: Medium volume of research	14
Group D: Low volume of research	6
Group E: Teaching-intensive	3
Group F: Specialist institutions	4

(Thirty-nine questionnaires were returned. The numbers in groups C and D differ from those stated in the full report, as institutions in these groups hosted visits by members of the team, without having been asked to complete a questionnaire.)

- 1.2 The questionnaire was in five parts: responses relating to the sections on 'Policy, strategy and planning', 'Resource allocation' and 'Human resources strategy' are reported here. Sections on 'Library and information services' and 'Infrastructure and equipment' are integral to Annex C.
- 1.3 The findings are presented in such a way as to prevent their direct attribution to any institution. Anonymity was requested by many of the respondents, and the findings do not depend upon knowledge of particular circumstances or histories for their validity.
- 1.4 The abbreviations of T, R and O (teaching, research and other activities) are used throughout this Annex. The definitions and characteristics of these activities are defined in the main report. Where R is used specifically in a wider context than RAE activities, it is so stated.
- 1.5 This Annex does not attempt to draw conclusions from the survey, other than to group responses and evidence where appropriate. Indeed, the divergence of views found in many of the areas questioned would make an attempt to draw a consensus impossible. It is sufficient to conclude that only in a very few instances is there consensus on a particular aspect of policy or practice. The fact that institutions approach this point from a variety of backgrounds and experience necessarily means that the impact of the RAE and the interface between T and R are experienced in different ways in different places.

## 2 Policy, strategy and planning

2.1 In this section, questions were asked about:

- the existence of strategies for T, R and O and their interdependence
- the interaction of T and R
- the impact of the RAE on both T and R
- changes in policies and practices as a result of the RAE
- the mechanisms within the institutional planning process for taking account of strategic aims for T, R and O
- the mechanisms for communicating institutional policy to staff.

2.2 All institutions across the range of respondents have strategies for T, R and O. These range from a stated requirement to achieve international excellence in all areas, to a mission statement for one of the least research-active institutions in the group requiring synergy between T, R and O. All of the statements recognise the interaction of activities at institutional level and below. The methods employed for achieving these visions vary greatly, but the intention and mechanisms to achieve them exist across the sector, irrespective of the level and type of research activity taking place.

2.3 There is also particular emphasis from many institutions on the importance of the interaction of T and R with O.

2.4 Experience of the interaction of T and R varies. Institutions were asked to select how they would describe the interaction of T and R from the following list:

- a) T&R are indivisible
- b) T&R support and enrich each other in broadly equal measure
- c) T supports and enriches R
- d) R supports and enriches T
- e) little synergy – the relationship is neutral or independent
- f) antipathetic – they compete or detract in some way.

2.5 Not all answers could be easily categorised (for example, some institutions responded with their view of the sector, rather than a view for that institution). By number, the responses were these:

a) T&R are indivisible	<b>7</b>
b) T& R support each other in broadly equal measure	<b>16</b>
c) T supports and enriches R	<b>0</b>
d) R supports and enriches T	<b>5</b>

e) little synergy	0
f) antipathetic	0

2.6 A common, but not universally accepted response, is that the degree and type of interaction varies by subject. The type of institution is also an influencing factor. The majority of those who responded a) are within Groups A and B; all institutions who responded d) are Group D institutions.

2.7 More than one institution also noted that O is a source of enrichment for T and R and vice-versa.

*'Students gain from being taught by academic staff who are experts in their field, whilst researchers engaged in teaching may be stimulated and challenged by intelligent questioning.'* (Group A institution)

*'The institution clearly sees that the T, R and O functions are closely interrelated. Undergraduate project work is closely tied to staff research and interests, and contacts developed through short course training provide posts for student work placements.'* (Group F institution)

2.8 Experience of the impact of the RAE varies by type of institution. One respondent observes that:

*'Since it is an ever-present structural constraint it inevitably influences at some level every aspect of our activity'.* (Group C institution)

2.9 Group D and E institutions unanimously report that both the quality and volume of research have increased, which in turn has improved the quality of teaching, but, occasionally, with the reservation that time available for T has diminished.

*'The quality of the teaching in respect to its relevance to current developments in the subject and the enthusiasm of the teachers is usually improved if the teachers are research active.'* (Group D institution)

2.10 Group A institutions report no impact on the volume or quality of research or teaching, but with the observation from one that the type of R has been influenced (stating that the RAE discourages research work of long gestation).

2.11 Taken together, Groups B and C generally report an improvement in the quality of research, sometimes with a positive impact on the quality of T. However, these groups also reported some negative impacts of the RAE, in discouraging:

- multidisciplinary research

- research 'at the margins', in areas other than the Units of Assessment
- 'high risk' research, which may not lead to publishable outcomes
- work with business and industry.

Many of these institutions also believe that the RAE encourages premature publication.

- 2.12 During the existence of the RAE other factors have had an impact T, which it is not always easy to disentangle from experiences of the RAE. One institution notes that:

*'Changes in modes of delivery, learning situations and learning experiences and assessment are regularly being explored, but this is due to internal quests for excellence in pedagogical practice rather than to any RAE pressures.'* (Group A institution)

- 2.13 The great majority of respondents indicated a wide range of policies and practices which have changed as a result of the RAE. Only two institutions (both Group A) reported making no changes. There is no correlation between the type of institution and the type of changes which have taken place. The actions taken include:

- investment and refurbishment designed for maximum impact on the research profile
- institutional restructuring
- more explicit research management.

- 2.14 One institution reported a positive use of the RAE assessments in its performance measurement.

*'Our aim is continuous improvement in both T and R. RAE is a measure of our relative performance and is part of the measurement we make towards the goal of continuous improvement in research.'* (Group B institution)

- 2.15 All institutions employ an annual planning cycle which, to a greater or lesser degree, requires input from individual academic areas. The degree of flexibility varies, with Group D institutions allowing less flexibility in setting individual department/school targets. All institutions, however, report the need for department/school plans to conform with/contribute to institutional objectives for T, R and O. The balance required for one institution as whole is also highlighted in its planning for individual academic areas:

*'The university would not normally consider offering taught courses in any subject area that did not arise from an existing research base within the institution.'* (Group C institution)

- 2.16 The planning process for all of the respondents necessarily involves a cascade and dissemination of information. In addition, to reach a wider and more general staff audience, many report the use of newsletters, web pages and staff meetings to keep staff informed and elicit views.

### 3 Resource allocation

3.1 This section of the questionnaire asked for information covering:

- how strategies and priorities for R and T affect the allocation of resources
- the extent to which RAE rankings influence the internal allocation of research funding
- the extent to which TQA scores influence the internal allocation of research funding
- explicit incentives in resource allocation to enhance teaching.

3.2 In general, institutions' planning and resource allocation cycles are closely linked. Academic priorities are implemented through the resource allocation process, either through direct use of the funding model or through discussion and priority setting, or both.

3.3 The extent to which the resource allocation model in institutions correlates to the HEFCE allocation of QR funds varies. Of the institutions responding:

- **24 institutions** take account of QR directly through formula funding
- **8 institutions** take account of QR through discussion in the budget setting process
- **1 institution** states that QR has no part in determining resource allocation.

Note: single subject institutions are not included in this analysis.

3.4 Of the 24 using formulae to allocate QR monies, some institutions allocate to departments exactly on the basis of income 'earned', some use the RAE scores but with different ('flatter') weights. Another institution uses the RAE weights and the QR formula but translated to internally identified Units of Resource.

3.5 Group D institutions appear to have the most centralist approach to the distribution of QR monies. Practices include R monies being ring-fenced or top-sliced with no direct correlation to RAE achievement. Several Group D institutions allocate R funds on the basis of future R plans and priorities rather than past achievements.

3.6 Not one of the respondents indicated that TQA scores were a factor in distributing teaching funds. Opinions were expressed that the variability in scores was too small to make them a useful tool in allocating funds to departments. Also, more than one institution indicated that excellence in T is expected. But, several institutions stated that poor TQA scores (compared with expectations) would lead to investment in that department. Many institutions also reported that the timing of refurbishments and capital investment is influenced by the TQA timetable. Three institutions also reported that the potential use of TQA scores in resource allocation was under review.

3.7 The majority of institutions also report the availability of small grants/funds for developments in T or for personal reward for excellent teachers.

## 4 Human resource strategy

4.1 This section of the questionnaire asked for information covering:

- human resource management practices to support the institution's policy on balance between T, R and O
- institutional promotion criteria
- staffing actions taken to achieve better research profiles.

4.2 Across all types of institution, human resource strategies exist to ensure that the institutional mission on T and R is reflected in staff contracts and practices. There is little difference in approach between the Group A institutions already successful in research and Group D and E institutions intending to develop research portfolios: all stress the importance of recruiting the right individual. One of the Group A institutions stated that it believes that recruitment of the world's best academics will necessarily lead to world-class research and teaching: one Group D institution stated that it now only recruits staff with a research profile which fits with the institutional mission.

4.3 There is also little difference across the sector in the criteria for promotion. Achievement in research activities has long been seen as a route to promotion, but all institutions report actively taking steps to balance opportunities to allow excellence in teaching as a factor. Exact approaches vary. Some institutions explicitly require a balance of T and R; some require excellence in one or the other. Excellent work in O is also recognised throughout the sector and the importance of performance in administrative functions is also stressed by many.

4.4 There is also consistency across the sector in different qualities leading to promotion to different posts (for example, excellent T is required for promotion to Principal Lecturer, excellent R is required for promotion to Reader).

4.5 A wide variety of staffing actions to achieve better research profiles were reported. Actions included:

- early retirement schemes
- use of graduate teachers
- establishment of some research-only posts
- mentoring
- reduced T load for research-active teachers.

About half of the respondents reported using one or more of these approaches specifically to bolster the RAE. The other half also reported using staffing actions such as these as a response to other factors unrelated to the RAE (such as increased student numbers).