

Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Advocacy Paper

Humanities and Creative Arts: Recognising Esteem Factors and Non-Traditional Publications in Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Initiative

Over the next few months, the Australian Research Council (ARC) will finalise the incorporation of esteem measures and non-traditional publications into the Humanities and Creative Arts (HCA) Cluster of the Excellence in Research in Australia (ERA) Initiative. This draft paper documents the consensus building in these two areas and highlights areas in which further work is required. CHASS will present the final version of the paper to the ARC in November, supporting the inclusion of esteem measures and non-traditional publications, and recommending continual consultation on ERA to ensure the research quality assessment process is dynamic and responsive to disciplinary developments.

Background

The question of Creative Arts Research has been debated in Australia since Dawkins Reforms transformed the university sector in the late 1980s. At that time, a range of specialist arts training institutions were merged into the university sector, and a large number of arts practitioners found themselves within the research based-structures of academia. While the number of creative artists obtaining higher degrees has risen exponentially in the years since, the research status of their work has yet to be fully resolved.

Since the early 1990s, a range of inquiries, studies and reports have touched on the question of research in the Creative Arts. These include: *Creative Nation: Commonwealth cultural policy* (1994); *Research in The Creative Arts* (also known as the Strand Report) (1998); *Knowing Ourselves and Others* (commissioned by the ARC) (1998); an Australian Academy of the Humanities and Australia Research Council special project 'Towards a research strategy for the creative arts: Creative practice, publication and research training' (2004) and published as *Innovation in Australian Arts, Media and Design* (2004); the Australia Council's *Planning for the future* (2001); *Myer Report* (2002); *Imagine Australia* (2005); *Educating for a Creative workforce* (2007); *Towards a Creative Australia* (2008).

Despite the mountain of material debating the question of research in the Creative Arts, and the passing of 20 years since the Dawkins revolution, the notion of primarily practice-led research, common within the creative arts sector, has not yet been fully incorporated into universities' research recognition and funding frameworks. Additionally, humanities scholars pursuing innovative ways of communicating research findings, for example, through documentaries and online technologies, are often marginalised by narrow focus on traditional notions of scholarship and publication.

Specifically, distinct discrepancies remain in the training, assessment and funding of creative arts research and elements of the humanities. For example, the Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) has for the past decade not recognised creative work or non-traditional scholarly publications in its process for collating and auditing research outputs.

The development of the Excellence in Research for Australia initiative offers a distinct opportunity to clarify the wide-ranging and often unique manifestations of quality Australian research across disciplinary boundaries. This is an important step forward in the process of recognising creative works and non-traditional publications as research.

Excellence of Research for Australia (ERA)

The development of the ERA initiative and current enquiries into the costs of research demonstrate the need for a resolution of the ongoing question of how to measure and assess research quantity and quality in the Creative Arts and the Humanities.

The Creative Arts and Humanities sub-committees of the ERA Indicators Development Group have already done much of the background work into building a consensus on how to successfully incorporate unique indicators of research excellence in the humanities and creative arts into the ERA Process.

A successful integration of creative arts research and non-traditional scholarly publications into the ERA evaluation process will help:

- To ensure that structures in place to measure research excellence in the Creative Arts and Humanities are consistent with statistical collection and research funding mechanisms.
- To have practice-based research models accepted nationally as 'research' in research data collection mechanisms such as HERDC or any future such mechanisms.
- To bring researchers, university administrators, Deputy Vice-Chancellors of Research, the Australia Research Council, DEEWR and DIISR onto the same page.
- To have a consistency between what is accepted as research in granting higher degrees, by grant funding bodies, and in research data collection mechanisms such as HERDC.
- To give creative arts a stronger foothold in the competition for research dollars.
- To ensure that creative arts research and non-traditional humanities scholarship is adequately represented in the research performance of universities.
- To promote the Creative Arts as a worthwhile field of higher study, and to articulate the benefits of artistic practice as research.
- To encourage innovative ways of presenting new knowledge.

The definition of research adopted by the ERA process recognises the contribution of creative endeavours to the enhancement of knowledge:

[Research is] the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative. This definition of research is consistent with a broad notion of research and experimental development (R&D) as comprising creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to

increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise applications.¹

The 2009 trial evaluation of the HCA cluster includes a number of discipline-specific indicators to assist in evaluating Humanities and Creative Arts disciplines, with a distinct attempt to mesh qualitative and quantitative measures.

- Creative Works have been included as eligible types of research output, accompanied by a statement outlining the work's research component.
- Citation analysis is NOT being used as an indicator for the HCA cluster trial.
- Peer review is being used to evaluate research quality in the HCA cluster.
- Each institution has the opportunity to submit a 10,000 character background statement for each discipline at the 2-digit Field of Research code with their submission.

Advocacy

It is essential that appropriate disciplinary indicators are incorporated and maintained in the ERA evaluation process.

- The purpose of ERA is to assess the quality of Australian research according international benchmarks. Judging Australia's research quality involves comparing each discipline primarily with its disciplinary peers abroad, not with other disciplines within Australia.
- The HCA cluster requires a delicate balance between quantitative and qualitative indicators.
- The inclusion of disciplinary unique indicators, such as esteem factors, specific research publications, won't jeopardise the quality assessment exercise and will ensure a better balance.

Key suggestions:

1. Include the following Esteem Factors in the HCA Cluster, all with equal weightings:
 - Editorial role (editor, member of editorial board) of A* and A ranked journals (defined list of journals)
 - Contribution to a prestigious work of reference
 - Curatorial role (head curator, membership of curatorial board) of a prestigious event
 - Elected Fellowship of a learned academy (national/international)
 - Nationally competitive (category 1) research fellowships
 - Prizes and awards (national/international)
 - Australia Council grants and fellowships
 - Deployment by the Government as an expert adviser on an area of specialisation (for example, evaluation of a government program, involvement in white papers etc)
 - Invitations to present plenary addresses at highly ranked international conferences.

¹ Australian Research Council, *ERA Submission Guidelines*, March 2009, pg. 9.

- Translation of books, chapters and articles into other languages
 - Invitation to revise or publish a new edition of a book
 - Have served on the ARC's College of Experts
2. Include a specific list of non-traditional publications, as either:
- Translation of research outcomes:
 - Broaden the list of 'research outcomes' to certain types of non-traditional publications
 - Submitted in a similar manner to Creative Works:
 - Development of a specific list of relevant non-traditional research outputs, set out in a similar manner to Creative Works research outputs, and whose inclusion is supported by a statement outlining the research component and submitted for peer review.
 - Broaden the list of publication-types to include an agreed list of eligible non-traditional scholarly publications:
 - Research articles in the media or popular journals
 - Legal cases
 - Occasional Papers and Working Papers published by institutions, government departments and not-for-profit organisations
 - Research report – commissioned by Government, Industry or other Organisation
 - Textbooks
 - Translations
3. Links between ERA and research funding
- Research funding should not be linked to ERA evaluation findings until all discipline clusters have been trialled and determined to be a rigorous and fair evaluation of research quality.
 - Institutions and the ARC should use ERA evaluation findings as a strategic planning tool, to assess the value of their HASS sectors, identify areas of future strength and ensure they are adequately resourced.
4. The submissions process for institutions
- University administrators have expressed concern about esteem measures and research statements for creative works adding complexity to the submissions process. As these measures are not included in HERDC, data for these measures has to be collected retrospectively.
 - Do all Creative research outputs need to be accompanied by a research statement, or only those being put forward for peer review?
 - i. If only those being put up for peer review require a research statement, there is concern that the extra work involved in collecting a research statement for Creative Work may lead institutions not to put them up for peer review;
 - ii. If all require a research statement, will this lead to self-assessment at institutional level about which creative works are valid research outputs? Could this result in less creative works being included for fear of their being rejected by the REC or the peer-reviewers?

5. Tagging Research themes

- The list of research themes is closely tied to the National Research Priorities. The HASS disciplines are not well represented in this list. If this list is to be tied to further research funding, it will need to be revised to more adequately reflect the contribution of the HASS disciplines to nationally significant areas of research.

6. Journal rankings

- Transparency of and continual consultation about journal rankings
- Further recognition of quality of local and regionally focussed journals in the top tiers of the ERA journal rankings
- A recognition of the impact of journal rankings on researcher and publisher behaviour

7. Higher Degree Research students as eligible researchers

- According to the ERA Guidelines, HDR students are only eligible researchers if also employed by the university, including on a casual basis. One of the implications of this rule could be increased pressure on HDR students to undertake regular casual teaching while completing their research, so that their research outputs can be included in an institution's ERA submission.
- Given that some estimates indicate that up to two-thirds of universities' total research output is performed by postgraduate students,² that this research won't count towards ERA could lead to less support for postgraduate research, less willingness to take on an increased number of HDR places, and, especially, less willingness for co-publications between supervisors and postgraduates students.

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² Siddle, D (1997), *Submission to the committee conducting the review of higher education financing and policy*, Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Education