

**Senate Committee: Education and Employment**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017**

**Outcome: Agency: ARC**

**Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ16-001002**

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing

***ARC - Assessing research impact***

**Question**

1. Please advise details of the response to the consultation of engagement and impact assessment:
  - a. How many responses were received?
  - b. What proportion of responses would be broadly characterised as: supportive; sceptical; and ambivalent?
  - c. Will the submissions be made public?
  - d. Please provide a list of submissions.
2. Please provide an update on progress made by the Engagement and Impact Steering Committee and Working Groups.
3. Which challenges seem to be largely solved and which remain to be solved?
4. When does the ARC expect to have the instrument ready for field testing, and for full implementation?
5. How dependent is the current model on case studies?
  - a. What specific measures have been taken to minimise agency expense, time consumption and evidence subjectivity?
  - b. Please estimate and substantiate the ARC's confidence in the effectiveness of these measures.
  - c. What is the likely compliance cost to universities of the case study component?
6. How dependent is the current model on metrics?
  - a. What specific measures have been taken to ensure the metrics are equally effective across all disciplines, and are comprehensively sensitive to all types of research activity?
  - b. Please estimate and substantiate the ARC's confidence in the effectiveness of these measures.
  - c. What proportion of the metrics will need new data to be collected, and what proportion will rely on existing data? Which existing data? Please break this down by discipline cluster.
  - d. What is the likely compliance cost to universities of the metrics component?
7. Please specify the impact window the instrument will be trying to capture? (That is the period between the time of the research being conducted and published, and the time of its presumed impact.)
8. Does the current model include any component that seeks to anticipate future impact of research? If so, please outline its mechanism and application.
9. What specific measures are being developed to ensure the instrument will capture the benefit of non-commercial as well as commercial research?
10. What measures are being developed to ensure the humanities, arts and social sciences are not unfairly marginalised as a result of the application of an impact measure?
11. What measures are being developed to ensure fundamental research in the natural sciences is not unfairly marginalised as a result of the application of an impact measure?
12. What measures are being developed to ensure research whose impact lies in the future is not unfairly marginalised as a result of the application of an impact measure?

## Answer

*The Australian Research Council (ARC) has provided the following response.*

1.
  - a. There were 120 submissions to the engagement and impact public consultation.
  - b. Submissions were largely supportive of the proposed assessment model. While respondents had different opinions on how certain aspects of the assessment model could be developed, no respondents were wholly against the general idea of an engagement and impact assessment.
  - c. Submissions have been made public where agreed to by the submitting stakeholder.
  - d. Public submissions are available on the ARC's website at:  
[http://archive.arc.gov.au/file-search/Media\\_Centre?level\\_1=Media%20Centre&level\\_2=Consultation%20Papers&level\\_3=Engagement%20and%20Impact%20Consultation%20Submissions%202016&sort=asc&order=Document%20Name](http://archive.arc.gov.au/file-search/Media_Centre?level_1=Media%20Centre&level_2=Consultation%20Papers&level_3=Engagement%20and%20Impact%20Consultation%20Submissions%202016&sort=asc&order=Document%20Name)
2. The Engagement and Impact Steering Committee and the two supporting working groups—the Technical Working Group and the Performances and Incentives Working Group—were announced by the Government in March 2016. Since that time the Steering Committee and working groups have conducted meetings and work to review and provide advice on:
  - The guiding principles for the development of indicators of research engagement and impact
  - The public consultation process, including the public consultation discussion paper
  - The outcomes of the public consultation
  - The methodology for assessing research engagement and impact to be tested in the pilot exercise in 2017.
3. Through the Steering Committee and working groups, the ARC and the Department of Education and Training have developed a range of indicators of research engagement and impact that will be tested through a pilot. A review of the pilot process will identify any key challenges that remain to be solved for the first full assessment.
4. There will be a pilot of the engagement and impact assessment conducted in 2017 and the first full assessment will be conducted in 2018.
5. The pilot will test the assessment of impact through the submission and review of impact studies. For each impact study, the university will submit details of:
  - The underlying research
  - The mechanisms used by the university to translate the research into impact
  - The impact of the research.
  - a. Minimising burden has been an overarching principle in establishing the engagement and impact methodology. All the engagement and impact indicators were required to meet the principle of being robust and objective. The number of impact studies required for submissions has been kept low.
  - b. The ARC has a high level of overall confidence in the indicators, however, the purpose of the pilot is to test this. Following the pilot, all indicators tested (quantitative and qualitative) will be reviewed to determine the appropriate methodology for the first full assessment.
  - c. Participation in the pilot is voluntary and the pilot has been designed to minimise burden.

6. The pilot will test a methodology where engagement is assessed using a range of quantitative indicators supported by a narrative statement.
  - a. Through the Steering Committee and working groups which include experts in research evaluation and representatives across disciplines, the ARC and the department have developed a methodology for the pilot that is believed to be appropriate for all disciplines. Two of the key principles for the development of the indicators were that they needed to be comparable across disciplines and must not disincentivise interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research.
  - b. The ARC has a high level of overall confidence in the indicators, however, the purpose of the pilot is to test this. Following the pilot, all indicators tested (quantitative and qualitative) will be reviewed to determine the appropriate methodology for the first full assessment.
  - c. The submission of engagement data for the pilot is expected to require a mix of new data and existing data. An exact breakdown by discipline cluster is not currently available.
  - d. Participation in the pilot is voluntary and the pilot has been designed to minimise burden.
7. The pilot will test a methodology that allows for a 15-year reference period for the underlying research.
8. The pilot will test a methodology that is a post-hoc assessment of research engagement and impact.
9. The pilot will test a range of quantitative and qualitative indicators that are commercial and non-commercial in nature. The relevant definitions of engagement, impact, and research end-user that will be tested as part of the pilot are broad and cover commercial and non-commercial activity and sectors.
10. The Steering Committee and working groups that have overseen the development of the framework include experts across many disciplines including the humanities, arts and social sciences. The pilot will test a methodology that is designed to be relevant across all disciplines. The pilot assessments will be conducted by committees of experts which will include experts from the humanities, arts and social sciences disciplines.
11. The methodology that will be tested in the pilot is designed to apply to all types of research across all disciplines. Fundamental research is also supported by other ARC policy mechanisms including Excellence in Research for Australia and the ARC Discovery program.
12. It is expected that future impacts of research will be captured in future rounds of the engagement and impact assessment.