



Research Assessment: Constructing the Research of the Future

Dr Rosa Scoble
Brunel University – UK

Why Is Research Assessment Important?



Why is research assessment so important?

A few facts about the research assessment in the UK and impact on sector behaviour



A Few Facts

- RAE engagement

	1996	2001
Number of submissions	2,894	2,598
Active staff	48,072	48,022

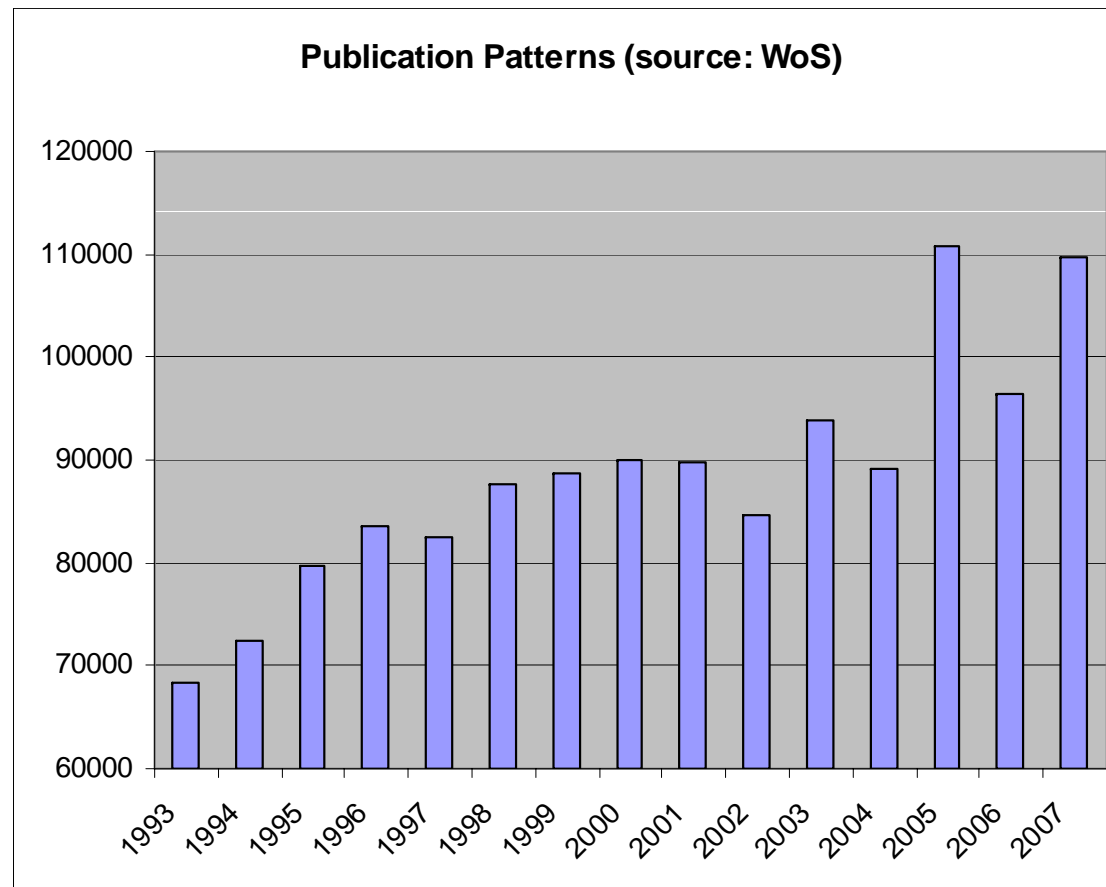


A Few Facts

- RAE funding 2007/8 (116 institutions) £1,415 million

	Max	Min	Avg
funding	£107,000,000	3,500	£12,000,000
% of total funding	95%	0.07%	19.6%

Changes in Sector Behaviour





Purpose of Funding from Research Assessment

A fundamental question

Research Assessment is:

Reward for the Past or an Investment in the
Future?

The assessment of the past is an indication to
where best to invest for a sustainable future



Two Problem Areas

Two problem areas emerge:

- Assessment of quality that is fit-for-purpose
- System that promotes and encourages sustainability in research



Assessment of Quality that is Fit-For-Purpose

- Sufficiently flexible to: accommodate the assessment of different 'characteristics' of quality for:
 - the whole spectrum of disciplines
 - the different modes of research within disciplines



System that Promotes and Encourages Sustainability

- Any type of assessment that results in funding will introduce changes in behaviours at:
 - sector level
 - institutional level
 - individual level



Summary

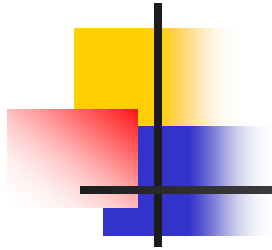
- Research assessment system that:
 - is able to make a quality assessment in all disciplines by accommodating the distinct nature of research either in modes, outputs and/or methodologies
 - encourages a behaviour at sector, institutional and individual level that will assure a sustainable future for all disciplines



What should we be looking at?

If we want an assessment system that is both fit to assess quality and that it encourages a sustainable future...

What should we be looking at?



Quality Assessment

Quality Assessment

How Can We Measure Quality?

- There are three main areas of research activity:
 - outputs
 - research student activity
 - income

- Students and income vary in level of activity within different disciplines

- Outputs display different characteristics based on their modes (some of which are more prominent for particular disciplines):
 - theoretical
 - applied
 - multidisciplinary

Quality Assessment Disciplines

	Theoretical	Applied	Multidisciplinary
Arts	★	★★	★★★
Humanities	★★	★	★★★
Social Sciences	★★★	★★★	★★★
Sciences	★★★	★★★	★★★
Technologies	★★★	★★★	★★★

Quality Assessment Outputs

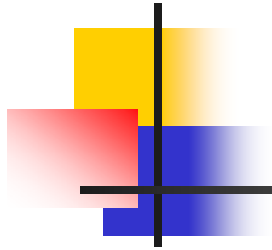
	Peer review	Citation	Impact
Arts	★ ★		★ ★
Humanities	★ ★ ★		
Social Sciences	★ ★ ★		★ ★ ★
Sciences		★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Technologies		★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★



Quality Assessment Multidisciplinary

- How to assess multidisciplinary research
 - citation (WoS multidisciplinary journals include Science and Nature)?
 - expert review?

more questions than answers...



Sustainable Future



Sustainable Future

- Changes in the behaviour of the system are mainly a consequence of the 'drivers' of the assessment process that are part of the methodology
- The 'drivers' are all the elements of the assessment that are either:
 - selected as indicators
 - part of the criteria



Sustainable Future Characteristics

Encourage through the assessment methodology

- Some characteristics:
 - expansion of the research base
 - multidisciplinary research
 - all modes of research
 - end-user engagement
 - planned future

Sustainable Future

Expansion of the Research Base

- Drivers in the assessment that will:
 - reward research student activity
 - adjust quality assessment for new researchers



Sustainable Future Multidisciplinary Research

- Drivers in the assessment that will:
 - able to recognise contribution to multidisciplinary research
 - reward collaboration



Sustainable Future

All Modes of Research

- Drivers in the assessment that will:
 - recognise both impact and citation
 - where citation is unreliable adopt peer review to assess quality of theoretical research



Sustainable Future

End-user Engagement

- Drivers in the assessment that will:
 - recognise and reward research that works with end-users

Sustainable Future

Planned Future



- Drivers in the assessment that will:
 - reward sound and focused strategic plans
 - reward the development of groups and centres that allow continuity in research beyond individuals

Sustainable Future

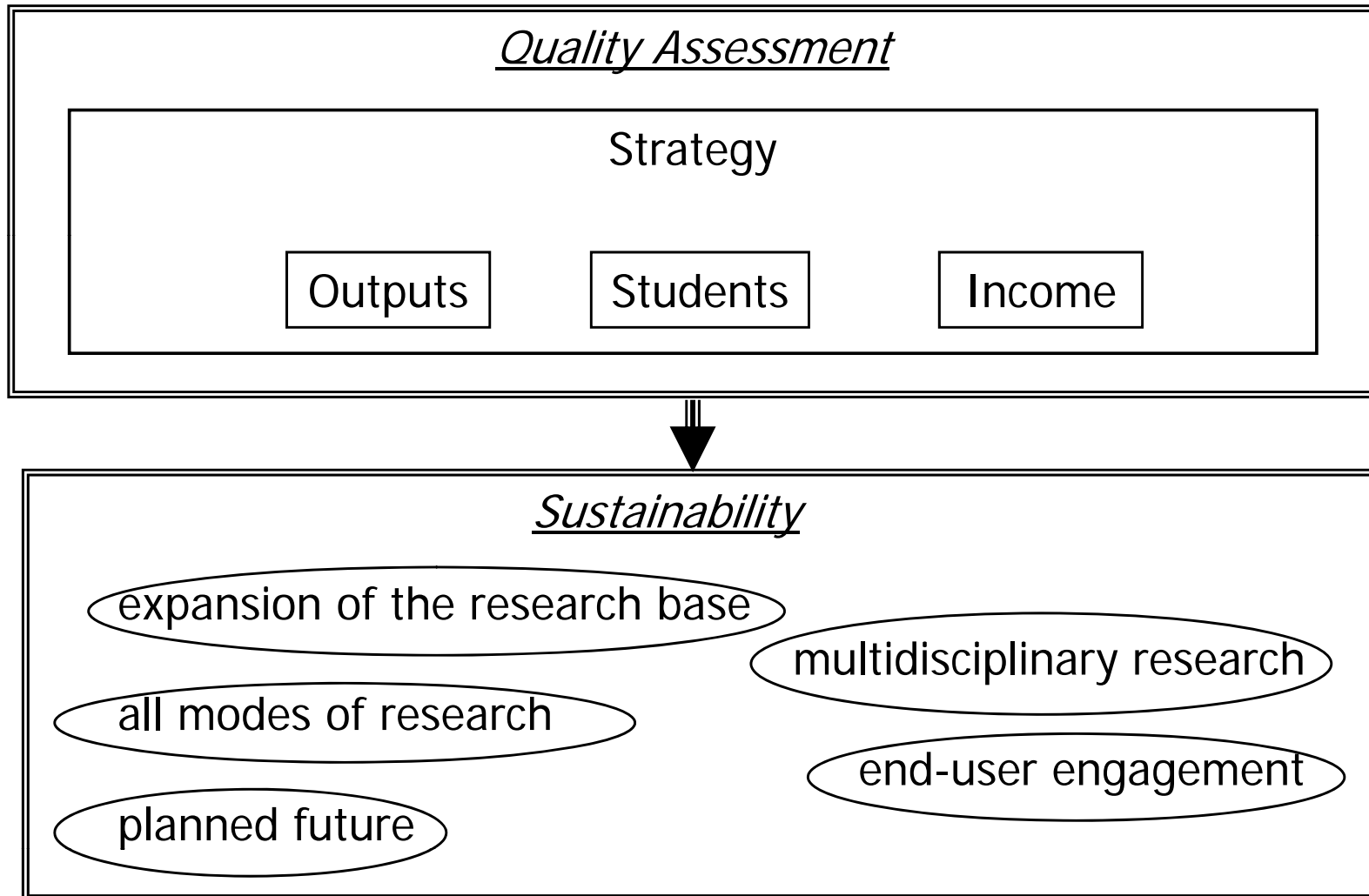
How to Promote Engagement

To promote the engagement of institutions in a sustainable future - it is necessary to add other elements to the assessment that are not based on the individual researchers' performance

therefore:

assessment of the institutional strategies that promote sustainable research

A Model for Research Assessment



Research Assessment - UK

Present and Future



- successive assessments refined to reduce 'gaming'
- move to more metrics based systems might reduce gaming, but might put in peril sustainability



THANK YOU