

ATN RESPONSE TO CHASS PROPOSALS

HUMANITIES & LAW IN THE RQF

The ATN welcomes the opportunity to comment on CHASS' proposed models for the assessment of Humanities and Law in the upcoming Research Quality Framework (RQF). It is vitally important that the RQF be realised in a form that best serves the needs of Australia's higher education sector.

Recognising the difficulty in including so many discipline areas in a single RQF panel, the ATN would agree that steps must be taken to ensure that the humanities and social sciences are able to be assessed effectively.

Accordingly, we would make the following observations about the three proposed solutions:

Proposal 1

The ATN would not support splitting the panel. While this might seem initially to be a viable solution, it would cause some difficulties when staff are involved in multiple discipline areas or involved in interdisciplinary research within the humanities.

In addition, this option has previously been discussed by the Humanities Academy and agreement on how/where the split should take place was not able to be reached. Reaching a consensus on the exact split of panels would be problematic.

Proposal 2

We believe that the option to leave the existing range of disciplines in Panel 11, but appoint two separate groups of assessors to examine the evidence portfolios presented in this area, is the best solution.

This is the simplest option and will allow the two groups to work closely together and distribute submissions received with sufficient knowledge of both the disciplines involved and individual submissions to ensure that they are evaluated appropriately.

Proposal 3

This would seem to be the weakest of the three options. RQF assessment panels will build on prior experience and learning acquired from a number of sources, in large part through Australian Research Council (ARC) panels.

If this proposal were to be used, there would be difficulties in its implementation. It has the same problems as Proposal 1, in that it pre-judges which discipline areas should not be included in Panel 11. This would be further compounded by a possible lack of experience in other panels about discipline-specific issues. For example, there are areas of archaeology

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that may be closer to Physics in approach.

The important thing to consider is that the ARC panels have developed mechanisms for managing cross-disciplinary issues such as these over a long period of time and that hasty reorganisation of RQF discipline assessment would change these mechanisms and require building new ones from scratch.

The ATN therefore advocates Proposal 2 as the preferred solution for dealing with Humanities and Law assessment within the RQF