

The Council for the  
Mathematical Sciences

Research Excellence Framework  
Consultation on the assessment and funding of higher  
education research post-2008 (ref 07/34)

Are you responding:

- On behalf of an organisatio

Consultation question 1b: Are there issues in relation to specific disciplines within this framework that we should consider?

4. There are many sub-areas of Mathematical Sciences (and presumably other disciplines in the "non-science" group) where individual researchers might equally well be included in one of the six 'science-based' subject groups. This illustrates the potential for game-playing in this system.

Consultation question 2a: Do you agree that bibliometric indicators produced on the basis

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on the weighting of all these elements. The review of outputs will

Consultation question 6: Are there significant implications for the burden on the sector of implementing our new framework that we have not identified? What more can we do to minimise the burden as we introduce the new arrangements?

30. The bulk of work occurs in HEIs but the proposals seem to focus on decreasing burden on the panels.
31. Validation of the HEI's own citation data is likely to be very burdensome and difficult to implement, much as HEIs will attempt to take this on to improve their chances of a good score - Evidence Ltd's report notes that linkage of articles to Oxford University was increased by 40% by careful data checking (p32).
32. To an extent there is some inevitability that HEIs will spend large amounts of time attempting to optimize their tactics – some of the burden is self-imposed given the significance of subsequent funding decisions and the comparative rarity of the event.
33. Burden could be reduced by decreasing or removing the need for narratives such as the RA5; it was the experience of some members of the CMS working group that a large amount of time was spent refining these for relatively little attention from the panel.
34. Replacing a large-scale quinquennial exercise with annual fine-tuning (with suitable smoothing of results) could be

light touch peer review then special provision would need to be made for early career researchers.

Consultation question 8: Do you have any other comments about our proposals, which are not covered by the above questions?

36. Since it is likely that output from the pilot exercise could be "tuned" to give a broadly similar quality profile for an institution to that from RAE2008 (through judicious use of enough "fine tuning" parameters), pilot institutions will have a distinct advantage over their (untuned) peers - who could potentially lose or gain significant amounts of research income from the REF compared to the RAE.
37. Fine-tuned metrics that happen to give a good fit to a light touch peer review procedure in 2013 are not necessarily better than other metrics, and their adoption might well lead to serious distortions at a later date. A good 'fit' with 2008 data does not imply that the process is fit for purpose, and the process will inevitably lead to changes in behaviour.
38. The CMS is grateful to Graeme Rosenberg (Policy Officer, HEFCE) for his assistance to our working group.

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