

## **Joint Funding Bodies' Review of Research Assessment Response by the University of Bristol**

The University of Bristol believes that the Government should invest selectively to allow the UK's best researchers to continue to compete at international level. It is in the national interest, both socially and economically, for leading research institutions to be encouraged to build on their platform of strength, thus enhancing the UK's reputation as a leading research nation and maximising the contribution research can make to the national knowledge economy.

Given limited resource, some system of rationing is necessary if excellence in basic research is to be adequately funded. Research Assessment currently fulfils this role and should continue to be used as the driver for distributing the research element of the block grant in the dual support system.

Research Assessment should continue to be driven by the principle of rewarding excellence, as assessed by expert peer review. The main indicator of excellence should be the quality of publications. The level of competitive research grant income is also a useful secondary indicator, though it needs to be recognised that uneven patterns of funding do occur. All institutions should be assessed on the same basis and be required to submit all academic staff for review.

There could be some streamlining. For example, the textual statement of strategy and culture (RA5), and the analysis of studentship source (RA3b), are of relatively little value to assessors and very time consuming for institutions to prepare. They should both be abandoned. There is, on the other hand, value to the use of bibliometric indicators, although they are of very little use in some subject areas.

We are not opposed to a rolling Assessment, with each unit of assessment being reviewed on a quinquennial basis. However, the introduction of such a system would have to be managed carefully, both to avoid departments waiting too long (over 8 years) for their next assessment following 2001, and to ensure that interdisciplinary research is not disadvantaged. We would favour the retention of the system of grades, but there needs to be an incentive for those departments which are already beyond the current 5\*.

Funding should only be allocated to grades representing a majority research assessed as being at least of national excellence.