

# **JOINT FUNDING BODIES' REVIEW OF RESEARCH ASSESSMENT RESPONSE FROM LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In our view the current RAE system is a workable solution to a difficult problem. Its greatest strength has been in the granting of appreciable rewards to very high quality research. This is a considerable achievement in view of the inevitable political pressures (within the higher education sector) to share resources more equally. Overall the process seems to have worked well, at least for the Business and Management UoA. In terms of the overall 'approach' London Business School is in favour of the current 'peer review' system. We do not believe that the other systems, which are suggested in the 'Invitation to Contribute' e.g. algorithm, self-assessment and historical, would be an improvement. The use of algorithm would almost certainly increase the level of game-playing. Self-assessment, although useful in helping organisations develop research strategies, is probably unsound as a basis for allocating funding. We also feel that there is some benefit in having a system that doesn't change too radically over time because the better understood the system, the lower the costs of engaging in the review process, and the more likely the system is to influence behaviour in the ways intended.

## **2. MEASURING RESEARCH QUALITY**

We strongly believe that there should continue to be an emphasis on high quality, original research of international standing but, in addition, research on issues which have a strong managerial focus, and which are of relevance and interest to an international audience should be particularly encouraged. It is important that research should have real impact and influence on other researchers, public policy debates and the business community world-wide.

Measuring the impact of business and management research is a complex issue and we need to identify effective methods which could be used. For example, greater use could be made of citation analysis. However, in our experience caution should be employed in the use of citation analysis as certain inconsistencies can arise from the data. There is also the problem of comparing citation counts between disciplines. Another measure which could be employed is publication outlet for example attributing a high weighting to top international, refereed journals and top practitioner journals. Many universities including ourselves, already produce 'A-Lists', and the MBA rankings also use lists of highly regarded scholarly and practitioner journals. We must stress our belief that the emphasis on the 'top' journals must be retained.

As publication lags are often long (2-3 years in the case of some of the 'top' journals) the use of forward-looking indicators should be explored (e.g. final acceptance letters or evidence that the relevant item was being 'set' for publication). There is also a concern that the current system encourages quantity of outputs rather than quality and that this in turn mitigates against the writing of books and publishing in 'top' journals with extremely long publication lags. This should also be taken into consideration during the review.

The placement of PhD students in academic jobs might also be used as an output measure. Arguably one placement at a leading school would be better than in rather more second tier universities. It would be for the review panels to ask for this data from institutions.

### **3. COMPOSITION OF THE PANELS**

The selection of panels is crucial to the success of the research evaluation exercise. Overseas membership of panels may be helpful in providing an element of international comparison within UoAs.

### **4. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

The administrative burden is significant, especially for a small and specialist institution like London Business School. There should be a tailored process for specialist and small institutions.

It is crucial that the rules of the exercise are clear, published in good time, and adhered to. In the lead up to the 2001 exercise the advice and guidelines were sometimes vague and open to misinterpretation. In addition some of the 'clarification' e-mails which were sent by the RAE team led to even further confusion. General advice given often also differed according to which member of the RAE team you happened to speak to.

### **5. OTHER ISSUES**

Although the RAE works well at the top end in rewarding excellence in research, it is probably leading to behaviours at the bottom end that are diverting institutions away from other missions. Therefore, it is important to create a system which allows universities to pursue their fundamental roles without significant diversion for the purpose of research assessment.

There is some concern that the RAE 2001 reinforced disciplinary at the expense of interdisciplinary research.