INTRODUCTION

The Minister has announced that there will be a Research Quality Framework and an assessment process which will be run in 2008 after preparation and testing in 2007. "The Recommended RQF" document sets out the advice the government has accepted with a timetable and a determination on a few key issues. Key aspects of the assessment process, including the guidelines for submission and assessment, and the split between funding for quality and impact, and the modelling of the implications have not been provided. Although the government says it has taken into account the administrative and compliance costs for the universities, it has not given details of the support to be made available. The government has not committed to provide extra funding for the research block grants as yet but it is encouraging the view that there will be increased funding.

For good reasons, UWA has been critical of the design of the RQF, especially the approach to the assessment of impact. UWA has never criticised the purpose of the RQF exercise and has provided alternative suggestions about how to undertake the assessment in less costly, and more plausible and effective ways. UWA must now prepare to win as much as possible from this proposed RQF process and to have the systems in place to ensure that the right works are submitted for assessment in the right combinations with the best impact statements which can possibly be generated within the rules.

UWA has prepared well for the RQF exercise. We have run our own Research Quality Assessment process and have looked at the problems of HR data, most notably possible teaching only appointments and other non-research appointments wrongly classified as academic teaching and research positions. Further, we have examined the requirements for the collection of assessment items and the production of context statements. We have developed a tool, Socrates, to give a good account of what is known about the research and research related activities of all staff, schools and faculties. This tool, while still in development, is in the process of being rolled out to Deans, Heads of School and individual staff. More statistical work is being carried out on the relationship between RQA scores and the other data held in Socrates. We have purchased a near complete set of Thomson ISI citation data to build better tools to consider the academic impact of publications. Code has been written to include this data in Socrates but will need further testing.

THE RQF PROCESS AT UWA

It will require considerable planning and effort to minimise risk and maximise returns to UWA from our participation in the RQF. Several committees and working parties will need to be formed:

a) RQF Oversight Committee:

DVCRI, PVCRRRT, Director Research Services + Executive Officer – should this include some academic representation? – Perhaps add two Deans of research-intensive faculties to raise the visibility.

The Role of the Oversight Committee will be to consider the key requirements of the RQF process and how UWA will address those requirements. Fundamentally, the RQF Oversight Committee will:

- Oversee the design of the internal processes for meeting the needs of the RQF
- Resolve key issues in a timely manner
- Evaluate the alternative strategies on selection of research groups
- Identify which items will be subject to RQF assessment for quality (is this more appropriate for the academic committees?)
- Sign off on which case studies will be included in impact statements, whose work will be included or excluded and on what basis
- Sign off on all submissions and materials submitted to the RQF.
The Oversight Committee will report to the VC via the DVCRI and report regularly to the Deans at VCAG meetings.

b) RQF Technical Working Party:

RQF Oversight Committee (minus the Deans) plus Chris Rasmussen, John Arfield and David Glance

The role of the Technical working party will be to consider:
- the 'on-site' data repository which needs to be constructed
- its compliance with copyright laws
- its interface with RQF committees
- the production of digital materials for the data repository
- interfacing with the RQF information management system – as yet unspecified and undesigned.

The Technical Working Party will report to the DVCRI.

c) Two RQF Academic Committees:

DVCRI plus Deans (or Associate Deans of research) of AHSS, ALVA, Business School, Education and Law; DVCRI plus Deans (or Associate Deans of Research) of LPS, NAS, MDHS and ECM. For some purpose, perhaps both the Dean and the Associate Dean for Research should be included.

The role of the two RQF Academic Committees is to provide advice to the DVCRI on:
- Issues which have disciplinary specific characteristics of the RQF collection which involve work across faculties and schools
- Feedback to individual researchers and groups of researchers on their inclusion, exclusion and the submissions being made.
- Discuss the academic issues involved in the selection of items and groupings and provide advice to the RQF Oversight Committee.

Other ad hoc working parties may need to be formed to deal with unexpected issues and complications.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to the resources provide from the USF, there is a need for a science writer to be hired for period of 3-6 months to help with the revision of impact statements and other submissions. I would like to be able to hire Julian Cribb as a consultant to provide feedback on a near-final draft of the impact submissions. There will be a need to buy and build an appropriate server to support the RQF submission process and we will need to build interfaces to the RQF Information Management System. There will be costs for the production of digital materials including the scanning of articles and books only available in paper copies. There will need to be some immediate work on cleaning up the data in the core systems such as Alesco, PeopleSoft, Callista, and Research Master and already a RQF Information Management Steering Committee has been convened to progress this. This cannot be undertaken as a long-drawn out over-documented process as the data will not be ready in time for RQF processes, planning and submission. If the core systems cannot cope with the work, then 'quick and dirty' tools will need to be developed but these are no substitute for the real work in fixing the quality of data in our core systems. It may be necessary to hire a part time executive officer (say 2 days a week) to support this preparation and to keep track of documentation and progress.
ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

(1) How will researchers in the key medical research institutes affiliated with UWA be included in the RQF – if there is no change, what happens to funding flows from UWA to the institutes?

High Priority – needs to begin immediately (complicated by questions about the role of MRIs and the push to graduate students in their own right and strategies to deal with funding of NHMRC fellowships and grants).

(2) Should staff who are ‘really’ teaching only and who are not expected to do research be placed on teaching-only contracts or administration-only contracts?

High Priority – if it is going to be done, then it needs to be done before 31 March 2007.

(3) Will UWA allow its staff to be reported in the RQF through cross institutional organisations?

Moderate Priority - but the most likely answer is ‘no’, although this needs to be tested with the RQF Academic Committees. May be qualified by the answer to the question of joint publications with non UWA staff.

(4) Should UWA seek to recruit high profile research excellent research groupings?

High Priority - but the most likely answer is ‘no’ but we should continue with recruitment as normal but all new appointments should be checked for their RQF worthiness. UWA should explore increased 50:50 appointments with excellent staff at foreign institutions where this is appropriate and valuable.

(5) Should UWA seek to prevent poaching of this key research staff?

High priority - efforts should be made to encourage high quality staff to remain at UWA and, immediately, Deans and others should be informed not to agree to early severance before the census date. If notice periods are to be reduced, then the date should be no earlier than 1 April 2007.

(6) Statistical analysis of RQA and other Data.

High priority – encourage consultants to complete preliminary analysis as soon as possible.

(7) Thompson ISI citation data

High Priority – Thompson ISI data needs to be incorporated into Socrates for the following categories as a matter of urgency: citations per paper (DAG recommended), actual to expected citations, impact factor for journal. Data is due to arrive any day now.

(8) ‘Tiers’ for publications

Moderate to low priority - The DAG paper refers to tiers of ranked research output (eg. journals, book publishers, conferences) and reporting of output against these tiers – but no details are provided of what these ‘tiers’ might be. Presumably DEST or the RQF assessment panels are going to issue a list of journals by ‘tiers’. This seems a pointless exercise and is likely to prove very complicated and a further source of embarrassment and could well disappear in the implementation phase.

(9) Template for impact submissions and case studies.

Moderate Priority - Develop an on-line template for draft impact statements and case studies. Only release this for the period of draft impact statement submissions in April 2007.

(10) Map schools, centres reporting to Deans and other potential research groupings against assessment panels and 4 digit RFCD codes – including sub groups. Identify ‘leaders’ for drafting initial impact statement and context statements.

Moderate Priority - Important to develop a top-down process, which is not too elaborate, to shape submissions for the RQF. These maps need to be tested with the RQF Academic Committees.
## PRELIMINARY TIMETABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>14 December 2006</td>
<td>Release preliminary version of Socrates to Deans, Heads of School and Individuals – with view of data – including RQA scores - tailored to role – Socrates will need to be updated and made more elaborate throughout the preparation and submission phase.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2006 - January 2007</td>
<td>Meet with heads of MRTs to discuss involvement of Institute staff in RQF and UWA’s RQF submissions – may take several meetings to resolve issues. Resolve by March 2007.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2006 - January 2007</td>
<td>Resolve academic staff contracts issue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2007</td>
<td>Prepare preliminary view of the structure of UWA’s submissions to the RQF – prior to discussion with Deans and Heads of Schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2007</td>
<td>Meet with all Heads of School and Schools to discuss RQF process, submissions and issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2007</td>
<td>Agree on basic map of research groupings and submissions (but not individual research outputs) and confirm RQF leaders for each grouping – expect there to be around 80 groupings identified.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 March – 15 April 2007</td>
<td>RQF leaders produce draft impact, case study and context statements. (Can help be provided via communication courses and science communication courses – could these statements be an assessment exercise for these students?)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Could be moved to say May/June – but could lose focus if first drafts are delayed too long.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April – September 2007</td>
<td>Review and revise draft impact statements and case studies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February - June 2007</td>
<td>2006 publication collection and audit - routine but important.</td>
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<td>June 2007</td>
<td>Preliminary work on selection of articles and other publications to be submitted for assessment and which staff will be in or out of the exercise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 2007</td>
<td>Basic selection of articles agreed by researchers and RQF leaders.</td>
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<td>August 2007</td>
<td>Draft ‘context statements’ and check evidence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2007</td>
<td>Complete the process of refining and selecting impact case studies and complete ‘final drafts’ – send to external consultant for feedback.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October - November 2007</td>
<td>Academic committees (2 members from each faculty – both Dean and Associate Deans for research?) evaluate and score RQF submissions according to the known guidelines and report to Executive on their evaluations and expectations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td>Academic committees provide guidance for the preparation of the final submission for April 2008.</td>
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**Professor Doug McEachern**  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)  
20 November 2006