

Introduction

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) represents the Deans of faculties of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities in universities and higher education institutions across Australia and New Zealand.

DASSH advocates for the role of teaching, research and scholarship in the arts, social sciences and humanities by:

- sharing information and disseminating best practice between member institutions
- fostering research
- providing a forum for discussion of higher education management
- contributing to the development of education policy and administration issues with a view to establishing national position statements
- taking a lead role in fostering the arts, social sciences and humanities in Australasia
- creating alliances with related organisations and institutions nationally and internationally, and identifying and responding where appropriate to issues relevant to the arts, social sciences and humanities

The Deans of DASSH are actively involved in the governance and management of education and research in their respective institutions. They are ideally placed to provide an accurate and realistic insight into sector operations at universities.

The views are a collective input from individuals of member institutions of DASSH.

DASSH was not invited to the consultation process. Utilising their knowledge and experience would have foreshadowed much earlier many of the concerns discussed below.

DASSH welcomes discussion and research into methods for determining academic quality and international benchmarking. Journal ranking for this purpose is not yet as well developed for the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (ASSH) as for the natural sciences and engineering. It is of concern to DASSH that the ARC should be using this underdeveloped tool. Of greater concern is that ASSH has not had the opportunity to establish and agree to its own rankings, unlike science.

Other concerns are

1. The quantity of ASSH journals put forward by ERA coupled with very short time frames to respond that are not cognisant of academic workloads and institution calendars.
2. The quality of the data provided for comment – there are inconsistencies, errors, such as journal titles, lack of complete data for all journals.
3. Transparency of the process used by ARC to determine the rankings – who decided, how were they decided, what data derivation and verification processes were used.
4. The rankings indicate uneven and sometimes extreme variations in distributions within and between tiers.
5. The inability of the rankings system to accommodate interdisciplinary research. Much of the research work for Humanities and Social Sciences is interdisciplinary but the journals are ranked according to disciplines. Some of the inconsistencies

in data where journals are listed more than once arise because of the difficulty of attributing a journal to a discipline.

6. DASSH observes a disconnect between this work of ERA and the Review of the National Innovation System. Innovation is at its best when the work is interdisciplinary, within the ASSH sector and also between ASSH and the natural sciences. This was highlighted in the DASSH submission to the Review of the National Innovation System. ERA is focussing on disciplines.

Supporting evidence to these concerns has been put forward by a number of DASSH members. Much detail is supplied in their submissions.

DASSH is a peak body that represents the considerable number of disciplines of the ASSH. The tight time frames and the enormity of the task given to the sector has meant that DASSH is not able to respond with the depth of detail, rigour and due consideration and consultation that this exercise deserves. DASSH would like to be able to utilise the experience and knowledge of its membership in assisting the ARC to develop appropriate lists of journals and a mechanism to verify their use as one of the tools to assess academic quality and international benchmarking through peer consultation and involvement. The DASSH membership is also in a position of knowledge and experience to offer information and insight into cross-disciplinary work in the sector. However, to address some of the points raised.

Quantity and time frames

Journals in Humanities and Creative Arts Cluster account for about one-third or 6,500 of the journals listed. The volume of journals to consider is enormous for academics that have busy daily schedules in teaching, research and management. The time frame has been very short considering that the European Reference Index for Humanities (ERIH) has taken five years to develop.

Quality of data

The titles of many journals, particularly those in languages other than English are given incorrectly and in some cases no longer in existence. Many have been allocated to inappropriate fields of research, some were listed twice or more often under slightly different names and a number have been ranked in different fields of research.

In some areas there are omissions of journals in languages other than English, electronic journals and journals in sub-disciplines.

Process

Information available to DASSH on the processes for consultation and the selection of journals and their ranking is minimal. There has been little consultation on how the spreadsheet was developed - its design issues, principles and purposes of the rankings system. This adds to the difficulty of submitting comments against a spreadsheet.

Rankings

DASSH has concerns about the rankings and their consistency. There are extreme variations in the distribution of the four quality tiers not only between 4-digit FoRs, but also between 2-digit Divisions. For example,

- 2.92% of journals in Division 19 are ranked A*, but, 11% of journals in Division 20 are so ranked
- 7.43% of journals in Division 19 are ranked A, but, 18.37% of journals in Division 22 are so ranked

- 18.66% of journals in Division 19 are ranked B, but, 34.25% of journals in Division 21 are so ranked.

At the level of individual 4-digit FoRs, the disparities are even more extreme:

- Two FoRs (1902 and 2102) have no A* ranked journals, while one FoR (2002) has 22.22% of its journals ranked A*, and two others (2001 and 2003) have approximately 16% of their journals so ranked
- One FoR (1902) has only 7.14% of its journals ranked B or above, while two FoRs (2002 and 2204) have over two-thirds of their journals so ranked.

A spreadsheet with the data for each FoR and Division is provided, with scatter graphs indicating the distribution of tiers. Refer to attached table and spreadsheet.

Interdisciplinary

The process and format of data presentation does not provide DASSH with an easy mechanism to highlight the cross-disciplinary nature of its research. This is a hallmark of the success of ASSH. A matrix and peer consultation and review is more appropriate for assessing journals for ASSH.

Disciplines and innovation

ASSH are increasingly working with the natural sciences, further extending its cross-disciplinary reach. This work is making a significant impact on innovation. This point was put forward in the DASSH submission to the Review of the National Innovation System.

The Minister and the review panel have promulgated the concept that cross-disciplinary work is imperative to the Government's goal of a global leader in innovative and yet ERA, and the journals ranking process is focussed on disciplines.

ERA is an opportunity for a holistic national policy and plan to be developed that can deliver integrated funding, services, infrastructure and operating and guiding principles for the higher education sector and a national innovation system. DASSH strongly recommends that the ERA take this opportunity to utilise and work with other review committees. This will ensure Australia is innovative, educated and positioned to meet its own needs for the future and participate in and contribute to global arena.

The ARC Linkage Project *Strategic assessment of research performance indicators* considered bibliometric and non-bibliometric indicators as a knowledge base to support informed decisions in the use of quantitative indicators of research performance. It provided a list of 12 indicators, two thirds of which have no reference to publications or publishing. It touched on issues affecting the use of these indicators for ASSH.

The Use of Bibliometrics in the Social Sciences and Humanities, (August 2004) highlights the need for care and caution when using bibliometrics for social sciences and humanities. It recommends some strategies to achieve this. DASSH is ideally placed to assess these strategies and to provide a forum for ASSH in Australia to establish and agree to its own rankings.

DASSH sees itself as a vital part of the Higher Education sector, responsible for a large number of graduates and research projects. The ranking system proposed by the ARC is not suited to ASSH. The current methodology of bibliometrics for ASSH is not yet developed enough within and outside Australia to ensure a quality tool for assessing academic quality and benchmarking internationally for ASSH.

**Submission to
Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA)
from**



DASSH would welcome the opportunity to discuss with the ARC a project that will enable it to determine a clear, transparent process to identify journals and processes to develop a suitable bibliometric tool for ASSH.

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Distribution of "Quality" Tiers in ERA Cluster "Humanities and Creative Arts"

Field of Research	FoR	A*	A	B	C	Total	A*%	A%	A*+A%	B%	A*+A+B%
Law	1801	55	158	303	577	1093	5.03%	14.46%	19.49%	27.72%	47.21%
Studies in Creative Arts and Writing	19	3	6	29	184	222	1.35%	2.70%	4.05%	13.06%	17.12%
Art Theory and Criticism	1901	1	3	7	14	25	4.00%	12.00%	16.00%	28.00%	44.00%
Film Television and Digital Media	1902	0	1	2	39	42	0.00%	2.38%	2.38%	4.76%	7.14%
Journalism and Professional Writing	1903	4	5	11	12	32	12.50%	15.63%	28.13%	34.38%	62.50%
Performing Arts and Creative Writing	1904	8	28	63	179	278	2.88%	10.07%	12.95%	22.66%	35.61%
Visual Arts and Crafts	1905	4	8	16	59	87	4.60%	9.20%	13.79%	18.39%	32.18%
TOTAL FoR 19		20	51	128	487	686	2.92%	7.43%	10.35%	18.66%	29.01%
Communication and Media Studies	2001	7	5	13	18	43	16.28%	11.63%	27.91%	30.23%	58.14%
Cultural Studies	2002	42	41	42	64	189	22.22%	21.69%	43.92%	22.22%	66.14%
Language Studies	2003	19	22	23	56	120	15.83%	18.33%	34.17%	19.17%	53.33%
Linguistics	2004	33	70	128	249	480	6.88%	14.58%	21.46%	26.67%	48.13%
Literary Studies	2005	83	121	201	436	841	9.87%	14.39%	24.26%	23.90%	48.16%
TOTAL FoR 20		184	259	407	823	1673	11.00%	15.48%	26.48%	24.33%	50.81%
Archaeology	2101	7	61	177	203	448	1.56%	13.62%	15.18%	39.51%	54.69%
Curatorial and Related Studies	2102	0	8	12	24	44	0.00%	18.18%	18.18%	27.27%	45.45%
Historical Studies	2103	52	150	333	497	1032	5.04%	14.53%	19.57%	32.27%	51.84%
TOTAL FoR 21		59	219	522	724	1524	3.87%	14.37%	18.24%	34.25%	52.49%
Applied Ethics	2201	3	5	16	22	46	6.52%	10.87%	17.39%	34.78%	52.17%
History and Philosophy of Specific Fields	2202	16	41	69	96	222	7.21%	18.47%	25.68%	31.08%	56.76%
Philosophy	2203	20	52	90	176	338	5.92%	15.38%	21.30%	26.63%	47.93%
Religion and Religious Traditions	2204	40	98	171	152	461	8.68%	21.26%	29.93%	37.09%	67.03%
TOTAL FoR 22		79	196	346	446	1067	7.40%	18.37%	25.77%	32.43%	58.20%
TOTAL HCA		397	883	1706	3057	6043	6.57%	14.61%	21.18%	28.23%	49.41%

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gen ss/hum	33	70	166	256	525	6.29%	13.33%	19.62%	31.62%	51.24%
TOTAL WITH GEN SS/HUM	430	953	1872	3313	6568	6.55%	14.51%	21.06%	28.50%	49.56%