



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Science and Training**

Research Quality Framework

Assessing the quality and impact
of research in Australia

The Recommended RQF

**RESEARCH QUALITY FRAMEWORK:
Assessing the quality and impact of research
in Australia**

THE RECOMMENDED RQF


October 2006

Endorsed by the Development Advisory Group for the RQF

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The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Education, Science and Training.

Chairman's Foreword

On behalf of the Research Quality Framework (RQF) Development Advisory Group, I am pleased to provide this advice on the RQF.

The Development Advisory Group, in line with the request of the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, is pleased to provide this implementation methodology for the RQF.

The Minister indicated to the Group the importance of building on the work undertaken throughout 2005 by the former Expert Advisory Group (EAG) and that over 2006 she preferred to see a "deeper" consultation process rather than one at the level of national summits and workshops.

Accordingly, we invited universities to nominate a RQF contact at each institution who could provide feedback on some fundamental guiding principles for an Australian RQF as they were developed. A set of Guiding Principles for a revised model was sent to universities and other interested organisations for comment in August 2006 and the feedback received helped to further shape the Group's recommendations.

The Advisory Group established four key technical working groups to flesh out the detail relating to Quality Metrics, Research Impact, Information Technology and Exploratory Modelling. Their intensive work helped shape this advice. Summaries of the advice received from these groups are on the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) website.

Over the past six months, we have also consulted extensively with a range of relevant parties including the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, Deputy/Pro Vice-Chancellors (Research), various academics, representatives from the Australian Technology Network, Innovative Research Universities Australia, National Tertiary Education Union, Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies, Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, and a number of senior academics from universities in the UK. It was refreshing to hear of the benefits seen by UK Vice-Chancellors arising from the UK Research Assessment Exercise, which included the provision of an evidence base for Government to increase research funding, important feedback for university managers and an improved international recognition of the strength of UK research.

Should the Australian Government take the decision to proceed with implementation, further work would be required to implement the RQF. This would involve a great deal of interchange with the universities and trialling of some of the elements of the framework. General guidelines for the process would have to be developed in the first half of 2007. Panel Chairs and Members would need to be appointed as soon as possible so that panel-specific guidelines and assessment procedures could be worked-up and promulgated. A proposed timeline for the development and release of general and panel-specific guidelines is contained in this advice.

The Advisory Group strongly recommends that if the Australian Government agrees to implement the RQF, the overall block grant envelope should be increased to reward high quality and high impact research. This would be an effective mechanism to encourage research of high quality and relevance and to drive increased investment in research by business and the wider community.

Finally, the Advisory Group further recommends that the Australian Government consider providing additional resources to help the sector meet compliance costs, develop repositories, fund the costs associated with running the assessment process and develop an RQF Information Management System.

Dr Jim Peacock
Chair, Development Advisory Group

Members of the Development Advisory Group for the RQF

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Dr Warren King	Cooperative Research Centres Committee
Mr Terry Enright	Grains Research and Development Corporation
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List of Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ARC	Australian Research Council
ATN	Australian Technology Network
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
BAA	Backing Australia's Ability
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
EAG	Expert Advisory Group for the development of the RQF
ECR	Early Career Researcher
EIS	Expressions of Intention to Submit
FASTS	Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
Go8	Group of Eight
HDR	Higher Degree by Research
HESA	Higher Education Support Act 2003
IGS	Institutional Grants Scheme
IRUA	Innovative Research Universities Australia
IT	Information Technology
NGU	New Generation Universities
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Union
PBRF	Performance Based Research Fund
RAE	UK Research Assessment Exercise
R&D	Research and Development
RFCD	Research Fields, Courses and Disciplines
RQF	Research Quality Framework
RTS	Research Training Scheme

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Research Quality Framework (RQF) Development Advisory Group's *Recommended RQF* has been developed in line with international trends in research assessment and in consultation with the Australian research sector, and has taken account of the work of the former Expert Advisory Group (EAG).

The basis of the framework will be an expert review process involving the examination of the evidence of quality and impact provided by groups of researchers sharing a common focus.

The Development Advisory Group has developed this further by recommending a basket of quantitative measures that can be made available to Panels to assist the expert review process where appropriate.

Eligibility criteria recommended by the EAG will apply, with institutions having the discretion to nominate Research Groups and the eligible staff included in those Groups. Institutions will report the number of all eligible staff and the number of eligible staff included for assessment.

There will be separate assessment and reporting for research quality and research impact against a five-point rating scale for each. The rating for impact has been revised to include a progressive and more detailed five-point scale.

Research submitted for a quality rating will be attributed to the institution at which the researcher was employed at the time of the Staff Census Date (31 March 2007), instead of where the researcher was employed at the time of publication. This change to the EAG recommendation was deemed fairer, simpler and more in keeping with international assessment practices.

Research submitted for an impact rating must achieve a threshold quality rating of 2. In other words, research submitted for an impact rating must be based on research that is recognised as methodologically sound in its field.

The Development Advisory Group considers it important to allow research conducted prior to the assessment period to be included in order to properly assess impact. With this in mind, research submitted for an impact rating may be based on underlying outputs produced in the six years prior to the assessment period where the relationship between the impact and the quality of the underpinning research can be verified.

If implementation of the RQF is agreed to by the Australian Government then the RQF Development Advisory Group recommends that the Minister for Education, Science and Training takes the following steps in order to commence detailed planning and data gathering over 2007:

- accept the implementation methodology for the Framework, noting that further detailed refinement is still required;
- establish an RQF Reference Committee to oversee the implementation phase of the RQF;
- set the assessment period for the first cycle of the RQF at 1 January 2001 – 31 December 2006, with the Staff Census Date at 31 March 2007. The submission deadline for Evidence Portfolios would be 30 April 2008. The redistribution of funds would apply from 2009 with appropriate smoothing arrangements;
- agree that second and subsequent cycles be run six years after the first round and the same frequency thereafter, with the provision to run a second cycle sooner if it is recommended through the evaluation process of the initial round;
- set a funding formula to apply to the assessment ratings of quality and impact;
- set the proportion of available funds to be applied to the quality and impact scores;
- appoint Assessment Panel Chairs and Members as a matter of priority to assist in developing more of the detail required to underpin the Guidelines and assessment processes; and

- request that the Australian Government allocates additional resources to help the sector meet IT requirements and compliance costs and ideally allocate additional funds to increase the overall envelope for the Institutional Grants Scheme (IGS).

The Development Advisory Group is aware that if the Australian Government agrees to implement the RQF, more detailed work undertaken in consultation with the sector and overseen by an RQF Reference Committee will be required in a number of areas, including drafting guidelines and developing an Information Management System. This work will involve running pre-implementation trials and panel-based workshops, the outcomes of which will feed into RQF Guidelines anticipated for release to the sector mid 2007.

FIGURE 1: THE RECOMMENDED RQF

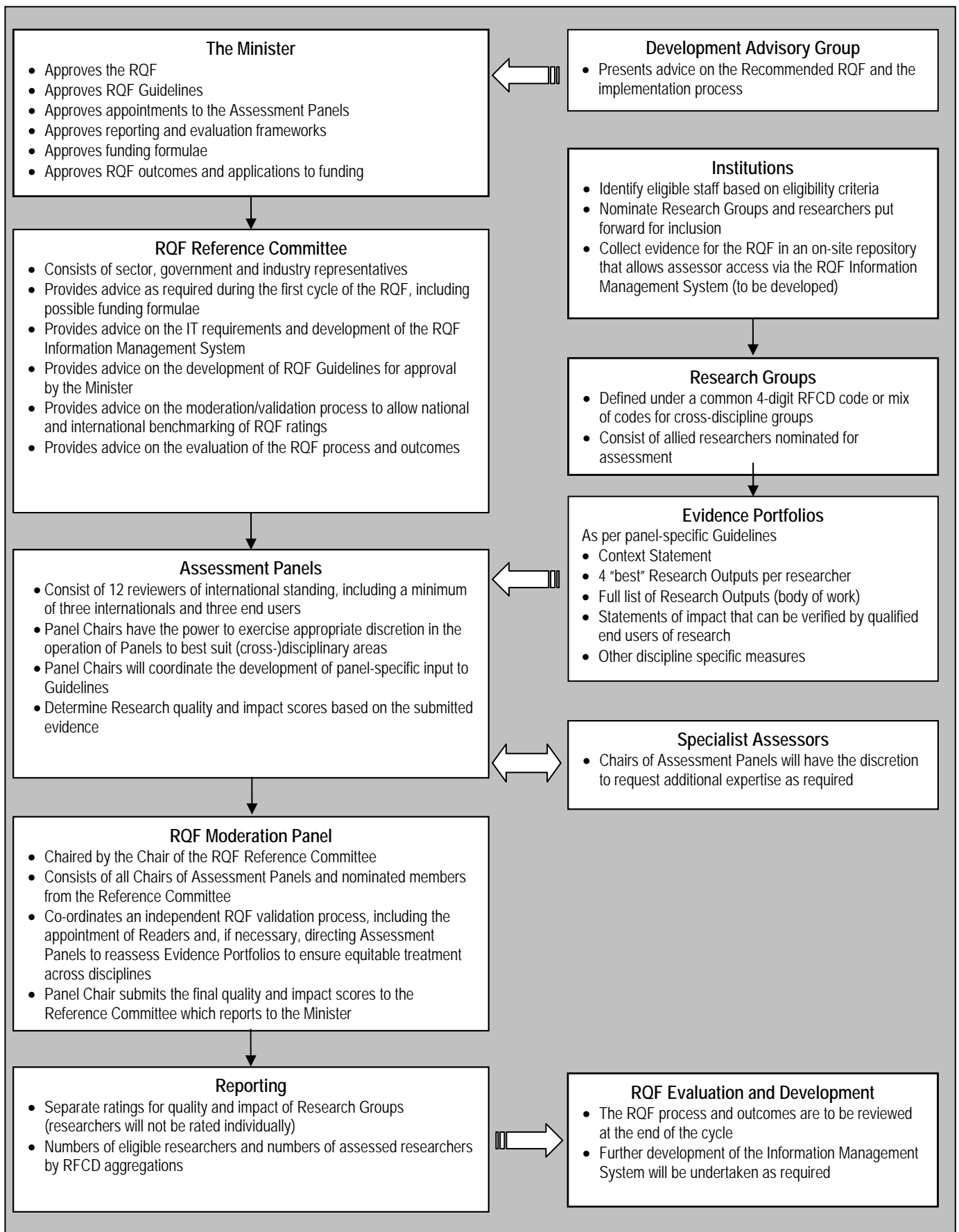


FIGURE 2: EXPERT ASSESSMENT PANELS BY RFCD CODES

PANEL NAMES	RFCD CODES	DISCIPLINE & SUB-DISCIPLINE AREAS
1. Biological sciences	2701-2799	Biochemistry and cell biology, Genetics, Microbiology, Botany, Zoology, Physiology, Ecology & evolution, Biotechnology, Other biological sciences
2. Physical, chemical and earth sciences	2401-2699	Astronomical sciences, Theoretical & condensed matter physics, Atomic & molecular physics; Nuclear & particle physics: Plasma physics, Optical physics, Classical physics, Other physical sciences, Physical chemistry, Inorganic chemistry, Organic chemistry, Analytical chemistry, Macromolecular chemistry, Theoretical & computational chemistry, Other chemical sciences, Geology, Geophysics, Geochemistry, Oceanography, Hydrology, Atmospheric sciences, Other earth sciences
3. Engineering and technology	2902-2999	Aerospace engineering, Manufacturing engineering, Automotive engineering, Mechanical & industrial engineering, Chemical engineering, Resources engineering, Civil engineering, Electrical & electronic engineering, Geomatic engineering, Environmental engineering, Maritime engineering, Metallurgy, Materials engineering, Biomedical engineering, Computer hardware, Communications technologies, Interdisciplinary engineering, Other engineering & technology
4. Mathematical and information sciences and technology	2301-2399 2801-2899	Mathematics, Statistics, Other mathematical sciences, Information systems, Artificial intelligence & signal & image processing, Computer software, Computation theory & mathematics, Data format, Other information, computing & communication sciences
5. Agricultural, veterinary, food and environmental sciences	2901 3001-3099	Industrial biotechnology & food sciences, Soil & water sciences, Crop & pasture production, Horticulture, Animal production, Veterinary sciences, Forestry sciences, Fisheries sciences, Environmental sciences, Land, parks & agricultural management, Other agricultural, veterinary & environmental sciences
6. Clinical sciences and clinical physiology	3201-3206 3208-3210 (less 321021) 321204	Medicine – general, Immunology, Medical biochemistry & clinical chemistry, Medical microbiology, Pharmacology & pharmaceutical sciences, Medical physiology, Dentistry, Optometry, Clinical sciences (exc. Psychiatry), Mental health
7. Public health and health services	3211-3299 (less 321204)	Nursing, Public health & health services (exc. Mental health), Complementary/alternative medicine, Human movement & sports science, Other medical & health sciences
8. Psychology, psychiatry, neurological, behavioural and cognitive sciences	3207, 321021 3801 3802 3803-3899	Neurosciences, Psychology, Psychiatry, Cognitive science, Other behavioural & cognitive sciences & Linguistics.
9. Social sciences and politics	3601-3705 (less 3702)	Political science, Policy & administration, Other policy & political science, Sociology, Anthropology, Human geography, Demography
10. Economics, commerce and management	3401-3599	Economic theory, Applied economics, Economic history & history of economic thought, Econometrics, Other economics, Accounting, auditing & accountability, Business and management, Banking, finance and investment, Transportation, Tourism, Services, Other commerce, management, tourism and services
11. Law, Education and Professional Practices	3301-3399 3901-4099 3702	Education studies, Curriculum studies, Professional development of teachers, Other education, Journalism, communication and media, Librarianship, Curatorial studies, Social work, Other journalism, librarianship & curatorial studies, Law, Professional development of practitioners, Justice & legal studies, Law enforcement, Other law, justice, law enforcement
12. Humanities	3706-3799 419901 4201-4499	History & philosophy of science & medicine, Other studies in human society, Art History and appreciation, Language studies, Literature studies, Cultural studies, Other language & culture, Historical studies, Archaeology & prehistory, Other history & archaeology, Philosophy, Religion & religious traditions, Other philosophy & religion
13. Creative arts, design and built environment	3101-3199 4101-4199 (less 419901)	Architecture and urban environment, building, Other architecture, urban environment and building, Performing arts, Visual arts & crafts, Cinema, electronic arts & multimedia, Design studies, Other arts (exc. Art history & appreciation)

SECTION 2: OBJECTIVES OF THE RQF

2.1 Introduction

The Australian Government seeks to ensure that public money is being invested in research of the highest quality that delivers real benefits not only to the higher education and research sectors but also to the wider community.

Research conducted in universities by individuals or teams of researchers is supported by the Australian Government through a dual funding system. This system comprises:

- direct funding from agencies (including the Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council) determined on the basis of competitive peer review; and
- university block grants which are performance based and are made up of the Research Training Scheme (RTS), IGS and Research Infrastructure Block Grant Scheme.

The Research Quality Framework (RQF) provides the Australian Government with the basis for redistributing a significant proportion of the block funding on the basis of ratings for research quality and research impact.

Currently, there is no system-wide and expert-based way to measure the quality and impact of research conducted in universities and its benefits to the higher education sector and the wider community.

The existing distribution of university research block funding is based on quantitative measures (i.e. numbers of publications, external research income and Higher Degree by Research (HDR) student load and completions) that have been used as proxies for quality.

These particular quantitative measures do not provide sufficient information upon which to identify and reward areas of research excellence or to encourage the wider community to increase its investment in Australian research.

Consequently, the Australian Government is committed to the development of a Research Quality Framework (RQF) that will provide a broad assessment mechanism for research quality and impact.

The RQF will recognise and reward high quality and high impact research wherever it occurs. The RQF should also be transparent to the Australian Government and taxpayers so that they are better informed about the results of the public investment in research. This in turn will encourage greater investment from Australia's business community, which seeks information about the directions of research and its possible applications.

The Development Advisory Group recognises the need for an assessment framework that provides industry, business and the wider community with the assurance that the quality of Australian research has been rigorously assessed through internationally recognised assessment processes.

The only assessment process that will enjoy the confidence and support of the research, industry, and business sectors and the wider community is one based on expert review and one which includes assessors with international standing as well as end users.

The Development Advisory Group provides recommendations here for the overall structure of the RQF. Implementation of the RQF will demand further work, including discipline workshops for drafting panel-specific guidelines and the details of how to translate the RQF scores into decisions on block funding redistribution. These issues remain to be resolved.

2.2 Research Quality and Impact

For the purposes of the RQF, the definition of research is consistent with a broad notion of research and experimental development (R&D) as comprising “creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge”¹.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) further classifies R&D into four types of activity: pure basic research; strategic basic research; applied research including new ways of achieving specific and predetermined objectives such as clinical practice; and experimental development including creative work and performance insofar as they directly relate to original basic and applied research².

The recommended model, presented in this advice, will enable a comprehensive assessment of the quality and impact of research outputs produced by Research Groups within Australia’s universities. It will also locate research outputs within a properly constructed, internally consistent scale of quality that can be benchmarked both nationally and internationally for all discipline areas. At the same time, the model has been designed with in-built sensitivity to the assessment of diverse and cross-disciplinary research, research undertaken conjointly and researchers at different career stages.

Fundamental to the *Recommended RQF* is accurate assessment of the quality and impact of research outputs based on the evidence provided. An expert review component involving peers of international standing and qualified end users is essential to a robust RQF. In order to improve the quality and impact of research the RQF should focus on both:

- the quality of original research including its intrinsic merit and academic impact. Academic impact relates to the recognition of the originality of research by peers and its impact on the development of the same or related discipline areas within the community of peers; and
- the impact or use of original research outside the peer community that will typically not be reported in traditional peer reviewed literature (that is, the extent to which research is successfully applied during the assessment period for the RQF). Broader impact relates to the recognition by qualified end users that methodologically sound and rigorous research has been successfully applied to achieve social, economic, environmental and/or cultural outcomes.

Original research refers to the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. The focus is on the quality and associated impact of basic and applied research that is directly attributable to the originators of that research.

It is recognised that high quality basic research often leads to valuable applications but that there is frequently a significant time lag between the research being done and its application.

The Development Advisory Group suggests that research conducted by existing group members in the six years prior to the assessment period should be included in the impact assessment, provided that the direct relationship between that research and the impact being claimed can be verified.

It is also recognised that some applied research which has high impact may be down-rated in terms of quality because of its focus on solving immediate problems or its application to a narrow sector of industry or to a small geographic area.

For such high impact research to be rewarded in the final RQF funding model, it must achieve a threshold quality rating of 2— that is, research must be sound by the standards of its field recognised in terms of originality, significance and rigour.

¹ OECD (2002), *Frascati Manual: Proposed Standard Practice for Surveys on Research and Experimental Development*, OECD: Paris.

² ABS (1998), *Australian Standard Research Classification (ASRC)*, Cat. No. 1297.0, ABS: Canberra.

Getting the balance right between reward for quality of research and level of impact will depend on the funding model adopted. The Australian Government and the Australian community generally have clearly signalled that both quality and impact are important.

2.3 Principles

The RQF will be underpinned by the following four principles:

- 2.3.1 *Transparency* - process and results are evidence based and clear to stakeholders
- 2.3.2 *Acceptability* – there is broad acceptance of the approach and measures
- 2.3.3 *Effectiveness* - the model achieves the purposes of valid and accurate assessment within an appropriate resource base
- 2.3.4 *Encourages Positive Behaviours* – the model improves the quality and impact of research and further develops and supports a vibrant and collaborative research culture in Australia

These four principles should be regarded as mutually reinforcing and complementary.

The Development Advisory Group recognises the value of collaboration in achieving excellence and so the RQF is intended to encourage university employed academics to undertake research with external collaborators.

Research collaborators include researchers employed in centres such as Cooperative Research Centres and Centres of Excellence, and collaborations may span institutions or work across countries.

SECTION 3: BUILDING ON THE WORK OF THE EAG

3.1 RQF Development Advisory Group

In March 2006 the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, received the *Research Quality Framework: Assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia – Final Advice on the Preferred RQF Model* paper from the Chair of the EAG, Sir Gareth Roberts, and released it for consideration by Australia's research sector.

At this time the Minister also announced the establishment of the Development Advisory Group to progress the work of the former EAG, to be chaired by Australia's Chief Scientist, Dr Jim Peacock AC, and to comprise members who have no direct university attachment (members are listed on page 4).

The Development Advisory Group was asked to provide advice to the Australian Government on an optimal and feasible structure of the RQF and appropriate processes and measures to assess the quality and impact of research in Australia's universities.

3.2 RQF Technical Working Groups

At its first meeting on 1 June 2006, the Development Advisory Group agreed to establish Technical Working Groups to advise them in developing their recommendations on the RQF. The Working Groups comprised a number of relevant experts and representatives drawn broadly from the sector, along with several Development Advisory Group members (membership and the summaries of advice received from most of the Working Groups are listed on the DEST website at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/policies_issues_reviews/key_issues/research_quality_framework/rqf_development_2006.htm).

The Quality Metrics Working Group was established to provide advice on the use of quantitative measures to assist in the assessment process for the RQF, taking into account the consistency and quality of information and data already collected by universities and reported to DEST.

The Quality Metrics Working Group focused on: the role of quantitative measures; the level of aggregation; relevant differences in publication practices in different disciplines; the types of measures that could assist the assessment process; and the process for collecting and deriving the measures.

The Quality Metrics Working Group recommended that metrics be used in the RQF assessment process to assist Panels in rating research quality. In particular, the Working Group focused on citation data, grant income data and tiered ranking of discipline-specific research outputs for inclusion in a basket of measures to assist Panels in making their judgements.

The Impact Working Group was established to devise a methodology for assessing research impact, building on the EAG's proposals and recent developments in Australian and international research and practice. This Group considered potential outcomes, consulted with the sector and commissioned RAND Europe to carry out an independent critical appraisal of its findings.

The Impact Working Group developed a model for the assessment of research impact and made recommendations for its refinement at the panel-specific level. Recommendations included a pre-implementation trial across selected disciplines and institutions in early 2007.

The Information Technology (IT) Working Group was established to provide advice to the Development Advisory Group on the scope of the information technology requirements for the RQF. The IT Working Group took into account the aims of the Accessibility Framework to enable research data sets and research outputs to be more broadly available for a range of policy objectives, not just the RQF.

The IT Working Group investigated the most effective form of RQF data collection and submission, the IT implications of the RQF assessment process in the RQFk, and issues of design, timing and cost effectiveness.

The IT Working Group recommended that both the development of an RQF Information Management System and advice to the sector on data gathering specifications begin as soon as practicable.

The Exploratory Modelling Working Group was established to provide advice on a method for aggregating quality and impact ratings for funding purposes.

The Exploratory Modelling Working Group was asked to explore the feasibility and relative merits of funding models that may be used to allocate funds tied to the RQF. Some of the issues for this Group included: the translation of quality and impact ratings for funding purposes; how factors of group size and research cost might be considered; and appropriate transition arrangements to support the process of funding distribution from RQF outcomes.

Modelling the sensitivities associated with possible funding formulae will continue throughout 2007.

3.3 Consultation with the Higher Education sector

3.3.1 Meetings with the Chair

The Chief Scientist and Chair of the Development Advisory Group, Dr Jim Peacock AC, has met with a number of key stakeholder groups over the past six months to discuss elements of the RQF, particularly those elements that were identified by the sector as requiring more detail. These groups included the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies (FASTS), the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee (AVCC), the Australian Technology Network (ATN), the Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) and various academics from the UK.

3.3.2 RQF Contact Officers

The Minister met with the Development Advisory Group at its first meeting on 1 June 2006. The Minister stressed that, while she was impressed by the range and extent of consultation undertaken by the EAG in formulating its preferred model, it was time to move consultations away from broad scale forums to more targeted consultation on the issues identified as requiring more detailed work.

To this end, the Development Advisory Group wrote to each university requesting them to nominate an RQF Contact Officer for the purpose of ongoing consultation during the final phase of developing the RQF. Forty-two officers, mainly Deputy or Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Research), were nominated to provide authoritative comment on behalf of their universities on issues relating to the development of the RQF. In addition to this, the AVCC also nominated its President to act as an RQF contact.

3.3.3 Consultation on RQF Guiding Principles

In August 2006 the Development Advisory Group developed a consultation document, *Guiding Principles for the RQF*, identifying five key issues requiring sector input: the criteria for constructing Research Groups; the method for assessing Research Impact and Research Quality; Attribution; and design options for IT to support the RQF.

A total of 32 submissions were received directly from RQF Contact Officers in response to this document, along with many more individual and discipline based responses.

The Development Advisory Group was encouraged by the constructive feedback from the sector. It considered all responses at its third meeting and this input played a major role in the Group's

decisions and recommendations on the RQF. The *Guiding Principles* were also published on the DEST website for the information of the public.

In addition to seeking the sector's views via RQF University Contact Officers, the Development Advisory Group invited representatives of key university cohorts to attend a session of its third meeting. Attendees included representatives from the AVCC, the Group of Eight Universities (Go8), ATN, Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRUA) and New Generation Universities (NGU).

3.3.4 Proposed Consultation for 2007

If the RQF is approved for implementation, work to develop Guidelines will commence in late 2006. In addition, the Chairs of the Assessment Panels will be recruited to assist in the development of panel-specific Guidelines and in the conduct of pre-implementation trials.

A draft of overarching Guidelines for the RQF will be developed for discipline workshops, planned for early 2007, to develop the panel-specific sections of draft RQF Guidelines. These workshops will build on the preliminary scoping workshop held in February 2006.

Each of the 13 panel areas will have a workshop, chaired by the Chair of its respective Assessment Panel. Workshop participants will have expertise in the relevant disciplines and will be representative of the relevant stakeholder institutions and groups.

The complete set of overarching and panel-specific Guidelines is planned to be released by mid-2007. This will provide the higher education and research sectors with a final opportunity to comment on the development process.

A trial of the RQF is planned for the second quarter in 2007 for selected institutions and disciplines so as to ensure an appropriate representation of different issues.

The trial will test the mechanisms for quality and impact assessments, the moderation process and the funding models. The outcome of these trials will also inform draft RQF Guidelines. Participating Research Groups will have six weeks to submit trial evidence portfolios. Assessment Panels will conduct quality and impact assessments and Chairs will moderate the process.

SECTION 4: THE RECOMMENDED RQF

4.1 Revised Methodology for the RQF

The Development Advisory Group has made revisions to the *Preferred RQF Model* of the EAG in several areas.

- *Research Groups*: will form the unit of assessment for the RQF and will define the focus of their research activities by 4-digit Research Fields, Courses and Disciplines (RFCD) codes and appropriate key word descriptors.
- *Attribution*: the research outputs and body of work listed by an academic during the six-year assessment period will be attributed to the institution at which the researcher is employed at the time of the Staff Census Date (31 March 2007), not at the time of production/publication of the outputs.
- *Quality assessment augmented by metrics*: the peer review assessment process will be assisted by the inclusion of relevant and appropriate quantitative measures of research quality which will be applied to a Research Group's "body of work" (that is, the four best outputs per researcher and the full list of research outputs for the Group). These measures may be a combination of generic and panel-specific measures to be determined by the Assessment Panels and communicated to the sector through the RQF Guidelines.
- *Five-point assessment scale for both quality and impact*: the RQF will produce separate assessment and reporting for Quality and Impact, against a five-point rating scale for each.
- *Accommodating longer-term impact*: work judged for impact must achieve a threshold quality rating of 2. Impact may be related to original research conducted in the preceding six years provided the research can be shown to have a direct relationship with the research being assessed for quality.
- *An additional Assessment Panel* has been created to better cater for the professional disciplines.

4.1.1 Research Groups defined by 4-digit RFCD Codes

For the purposes of the RQF, Research Groups will form the unit of assessment and will be organised in the following way:

- institutions will select Research Groups for assessment;
- institutions will have discretion over how many groups and which researchers are included for assessment;
- Research Groups will define the focus of their research activities by 4-digit RFCD codes and appropriate keyword descriptors; and
- Research Groups will be able to nominate up to three separate 4-digit RFCD codes (each with a minimum 20 per cent share) in recognition of the growing importance of cross-disciplinary research.

Research Groups should provide adequate keyword descriptors for their major focus and activities so as to:

- enable easier identification of research in specific areas not clearly defined by RFCD code(s) alone;
- help identify new and breaking research areas that are not adequately covered by the RFCD classifications; and
- allow more informed analysis of patterns of Australian research activity, including gaps and strengths.

In the case of cross-disciplinary research, a Research Group will nominate a single Assessment Panel to be its "home" Panel. The "home" Panel will be responsible for deciding whether the Group's Evidence Portfolio, or part thereof, should be sent to another Panel and/or specialist

assessors for external assessment. For the purposes of RQF assessment, Research Outputs will be classified as cross-disciplinary on the basis of self-declaration in the Research Group's Context Statement (4.1.5 refers).

Collaborative groups that span multiple institutions will also be accommodated within the proposed scheme for assessing Research Groups. Research Groups may include in their Evidence Portfolios research outputs that have been produced by researchers within a single university or through multi-institutional collaborations. These collaborations may include researchers resident overseas and employed by foreign institutions, academic and otherwise. Research Groups must specify when eligible academic staff are from more than one Australian university.

Co-authored Research Outputs can be submitted by multiple Research Groups according to a proportionate split of the contributions by its authors.

The minimum size of a Research Group will be five members but smaller Groups and lone researchers will be allowed in exceptional cases. Chairs of Assessment Panels will have discretion to consider special cases, granted on a case-by-case basis and consistent with RQF Guidelines. There will be no specified upper limit for the size of Research Groups.

In producing quality and impact ratings, Panels will assess a Research Group's research output as a whole and will not focus on rating the individuals that make up that Group.

4.1.2 Eligibility for Inclusion in a Research Group

Eligible staff will be research-only staff, and teaching and research staff, Level B and above. Teaching-only staff will be excluded. Associate academic research staff whose positions are funded through individual competitive grants may also be nominated for assessment. An example would be doctorate-qualified researchers holding Level A positions who have published research in their own right or make a significant contribution to a research output from the Group.

In order to be included in a Research Group for assessment in the RQF, an eligible member of staff must have a full-time equivalent (FTE) status of 0.4 or above.

Institutions must report their total number of eligible researchers. These numbers will be published. Eligible researchers not submitted for RQF assessment will be zero-rated and therefore will not contribute to RQF scores for Research Quality and Research Impact.

To take account of the research outputs of Research Groups produced in collaboration with external collaborators (including adjunct, conjoint [where they are less than 0.4 FTE], honorary and emeritus appointments), a list of the entire "body of work" produced by researchers over the assessment period should be submitted to Assessment Panels, in addition to the nominated "best four" research outputs.

Panels will have the flexibility to sample from the entire body of work and make assessments of the quality of the Research Group based on a holistic assessment of total research activity, where appropriate. In this way, the contributions of external collaborators are recognised in the assessment of the quality of research outputs for a Research Group, although such staff will not be included in that Group's staff count.

Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are defined as researchers within their first five years of academic or other research-related employment, allowing for uninterrupted, stable research development, following completion of postgraduate research training and/or equivalent research qualification or experience. ECRs will be identified in the Context Statement of their Research Group.

The Context Statement may make a case to the relevant Assessment Panel for fewer outputs to be accepted for these staff. In these cases, the number of outputs accepted may be less than four but

not less than two. Indigenous academic staff are to be treated similarly if appropriate. A PhD thesis is not an eligible research output for the RQF.

Researchers are required to nominate four research outputs over the assessment period to be eligible for inclusion. Assessment Panels will have some flexibility in the application of this eligibility criterion to consider cases where exceptional circumstances have resulted in a researcher producing fewer than the required number of outputs. Cases for not producing the requisite four research outputs could include, but are not limited to, career interruptions caused by non-research employment, parenting or carer responsibilities, or misadventure.

Research-only and teaching and research staff will be treated equally, and no differential weightings will be applied.

Detailed rules on eligibility criteria will be forthcoming in the RQF Guidelines.

4.1.3 Attribution of Research Outputs

Consistent with the methodology employed in both the United Kingdom's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and New Zealand's Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF), the research outputs and body of work listed by an academic employed in multiple institutions during the six-year assessment period will be attributed to the institution at which the researcher is employed at the time of the Staff Census Date. This date is 31 March 2007, the same date by which universities must have already provided data to DEST for the Higher Education Staff Data Collection.

Individual researchers may belong to more than one Research Group in proportion to their contribution (FTE-based and up to a maximum of 1.0) to each of the groups. Outputs co-authored by researchers may be submitted for assessment by multiple groups, with the respective contributions duly reflected.

Research Groups may use Context Statements to indicate key staff movements during the assessment period and strategies to address recruitment, including capacity-building, to ensure the future viability of the Group.

4.1.4 Institutional Submissions

Each institution must submit a statement to accompany the Evidence Portfolios from its Research Groups, which includes:

- the total number of eligible staff and the number of eligible staff included for assessment;
- a list of nominated Research Groups, including their 4-digit RFCD code(s) and the numbers of researchers within each Group who have been nominated for assessment; and
- certification of the submitted material by the Vice-Chancellor or Deputy/Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research).

4.1.5 Evidence Portfolios

Each Research Group must submit one Context Statement as the foundation of its Evidence Portfolio, which includes:

- information about the type, composition and focus of the Research Group;
- supplementary factual information that demonstrates the capacity of the Research Group— for example:
 - the total number of research outputs organised by research category;
 - evidence of collaborative activity;
 - editorial or peer review service to journals;
 - the numbers of research-only staff, Early Career Researchers and HDR student load and completions;

- HDR employment destinations (where known); and
- esteem indicators, such as the number of Fellows of Learned Academies and Australian Research Council (ARC) Federation Fellows;
- a statement of the Research Group's competitive grant income in the following categories:
 - DEST category 1;
 - international sources (peer reviewed only); and
- information linking any previous research of the Group to its impact in the assessment period.

Quality Assessment

The basis of the quality assessment for a Research Group will be:

- the four best Research Outputs for each researcher in the Group;
- the full list of Research Outputs for the Group produced in the six-year assessment period; and
- the evidence of research quality provided as part of the Context Statement.

Institutions will guarantee Assessment Panels access, within four working days, to the four best Outputs for each researcher in the Group.

In recognition of the usefulness of objective data and of the potential assessment burden on Panels, supplementary quantitative information will be provided directly to Panels, where appropriate, to assist them in their assessment of Research Quality. These measures of quality will be centrally derived (using the RQF Information Management System) from data supplied by Research Groups in their Evidence Portfolios.

1. Ranked outputs: distribution of selected category(ies) of research output listed in the Research Group's "body of work" into tiers, based on discipline-specific rankings. The basis of the rankings will vary by discipline (they could be refereed journals, professional journals, book publishers, conferences or performance venues). No weightings will be applied to the different tiers.
2. Citation data:
 - a. citations per publication included in the Research Group's "body of work"; and
 - b. the proportion of the Research Group's "body of work" that falls in the top percentiles for the discipline (determined from international citation benchmarks).
3. Competitive grant income of the Group.

Since standard citation measures are not applicable in all disciplines, further work to test alternative equivalent metrics will be undertaken at the panel-specific level before the release of RQF Guidelines.

Impact Assessment

The basis of the impact assessment for a Research Group will be an Impact Statement of up to 10 pages, including:

- an evidence-based statement of claims for the Group against generic and panel-specific impact criteria, including verifiable indicators in support of those claims;
- up to four case studies that illustrate the Group's claims of impact; and
- details of end users who can be contacted by Assessment Panels to verify the Research Group's claims.

Impact assessments will also take into consideration the information provided as part of the Context Statement. Assessment Panels will be given generic indicators and will determine additional indicators of impact as appropriate for their discipline cluster. Research Groups unsuited to impact assessment because of the intrinsic nature or the stage of development of their research can make a claim for exclusion from the impact assessment in the Context Statement.

4.1.6 Assessment Panels

There will be 13 Assessment Panels based on RFCD codes (see **Figure 2** for the discipline aggregations in Panels). The configuration of Panels has been designed to provide a balance between discipline coverage and likely workload for assessors³. The composition of Assessment Panels is based on the aggregation of broad discipline groups, which are defined by 4-digit RFCD codes. Institutions will nominate the primary discipline to which each of their Research Groups belongs, and these will then be allocated to the appropriate Panel.

To accommodate all research areas and to ensure a balanced distribution of workload for Assessors, an additional Panel has been created by disaggregating Panels 8 and 11 and creating a new Panel for professional disciplines and education. Final adjustments to the Panel structure may be necessary following the outcomes of the pre-implementation trials and panel-specific workshops. Each Panel will have 12 Members and will include a Chair, a minimum of three international assessors and a minimum of three end users.

End users must come from industry, business, the public sector or community organisations. They will provide a broad perspective on the determination of ratings for quality and impact and must be separate from the immediate collaborators of a Research Group, its participants or those agencies or individuals with a demonstrable conflict of interest. End users are persons who can legitimately verify claims of impact.

Where practicable, the RQF will also use and build on national assessor databases to provide Assessment Panels with an extensive database of specialist assessors at the 4-digit RFCD level. The database will provide details of specialist assessors of national and international standing.

Criteria for the selection of Chairs and Members of Assessment Panels will stress ability to assess a range of work within a given discipline area, including basic research and applied or mission-oriented research, and proven ability to assess cross-disciplinary research.

The Assessment Panels will be responsible for:

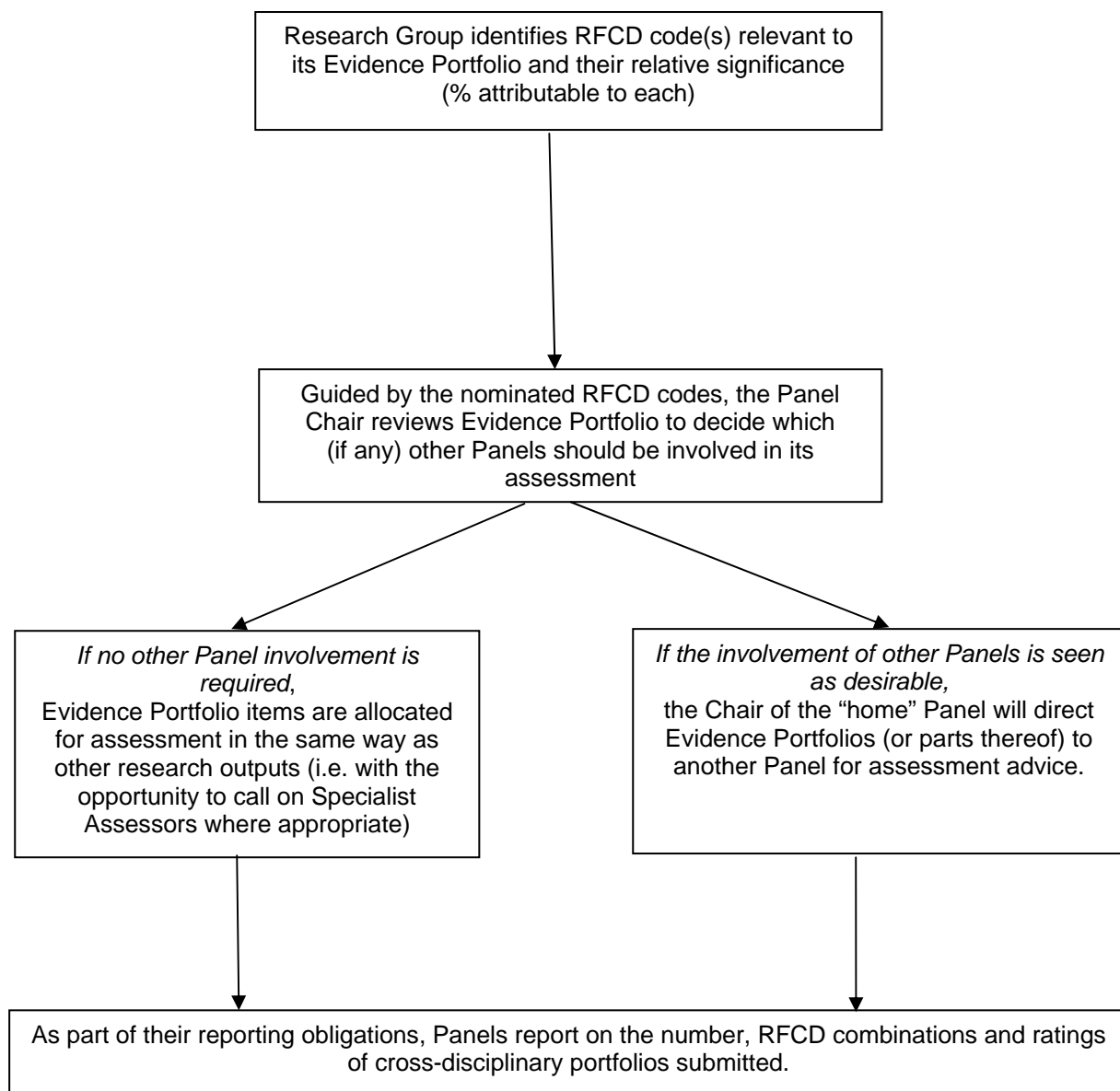
- developing panel-specific Guidelines within the framework of the overall RQF Guidelines;
- deciding how to assess research that is predominantly focused on national issues, including the area of Indigenous research;
- determining whether cross-disciplinary research should be referred to other Panels; and
- rating Research Groups for both quality and impact, separately.

Each of the Assessment Panels will be led by a Chair. Chairs will have discretion and flexibility to tailor the application of the RQF assessment process to the discipline areas for which they have responsibility, including the form and function of Context Statements, the use of Specialist Assessors for external advice, the extent and nature of supplementary quantitative information to be sought, and the treatment of cross-disciplinary research.

All decisions relating to the assessment of cross-disciplinarity will remain the responsibility of “home” Panels. Given the range of disciplines covered by each Assessment Panel, it is likely that many cross-disciplinary Evidence Portfolios and/or research outputs can be assessed within their “home” Panels. Any decision to redirect outputs (or parts thereof) to another Panel for assessment advice will be at the discretion of the Chair of the “home” Panel, based on advice from relevant Panel Members. **Figure 3** below outlines a possible process for assessing cross-disciplinary Evidence Portfolios.

³ The final workload for Assessment Panels will not be known until the number of eligible researchers and Research Groups involved in assessment are known and the proportion of direct assessment of research outputs is determined.

FIGURE 3: PROCESS FOR ASSESSING CROSS-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH



4.1.7 RQF Moderation Panel

The role of the Moderation Panel is to ensure equitable treatment in the assessment of quality and impact on the basis of Evidence Portfolios within and across Panels. This Panel is also responsible for submitting the final quality and impact scores to the RQF Reference Committee which reports to the Minister for Education, Science and Training.

The Moderation Panel will be chaired by the Chair of the RQF Reference Committee and will include the Chairs of the 13 Assessment Panels and nominated Members from the Reference Committee (5.2 refers).

4.1.8 Research Quality

Assessment Panels will assess research quality on the basis of the following five-point, criterion-referenced scale that is explicitly benchmarked to standards of internationally-equivalent excellence (see **Table 1** below).

The criteria for quality are intended to assess research that has a predominantly international focus as well as that which has a predominantly national focus or application. In this way, research on, for example, indigenous issues or Australian law will be assessed according to a standard of excellence appropriate to these fields. This principle of the appropriate point of reference for discipline areas will be addressed in panel-specific Guidelines.

TABLE 1: THE RATING SCALE FOR RESEARCH QUALITY

Rating	Descriptor
5	Research that is world leading in its field or makes an equally exceptional contribution in an area of particular significance to Australia.
4	Research that meets world standards of excellence in its field or makes an equally excellent contribution in an area of particular significance to Australia.
3	Research that is recognised internationally as excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which nonetheless falls short of the highest standards of excellence.
2	Research that is recognised as methodologically sound in its field and of high originality, significance and rigour.
1	Research that is deemed to fall below the standard of recognised quality work.

4.1.9 Research Impact

Research impact is defined as the social, economic, environmental and/or cultural benefit of research to end users in the wider community regionally, nationally, and/or internationally.

The basis for the assessment of impact will be an Impact Statement of up to 10 pages, which includes verifiable, evidence-based claims against specific impact criteria, up to four case studies that illustrate examples of those claims and details of end users who can be contacted as referees. Impact will also be assessed with reference to the Context Statement and the full list of outputs produced by that Research Group.

Research impact will be based on actual outcomes and their assessable impact. **Prospective impact will not be assessed in the RQF.** Assessing the impact derived from research conducted within six years will, by its nature, not allow long-term broader impact to be measured by the RQF. Therefore, the impact to be assessed for the RQF will be that impact which occurs within the six-year assessment period, and additionally may be based on original research conducted in the six years prior to the assessment period, subject to decision by the Panel, and provided that it can be shown to have a direct relationship with the research being assessed for quality.

Research submitted for an impact rating must achieve a threshold quality rating of 2. Assessment Panels will assess the impact of research on the basis of a five-point criterion referenced scale (see **Table 2** below). Impact will thus be assessed at a level of granularity comparable to quality.

TABLE 2: THE RATING SCALE FOR RESEARCH IMPACT

Rating	Description
A	Adoption of the research has produced an outstanding social, economic, environmental and/or cultural benefit for the wider community, regionally within Australia, nationally or internationally.
B	Adoption of the research has produced a significant social, economic environmental and/or cultural benefit for the wider community, regionally within Australia, nationally or internationally.
C	Research has been adopted to produce new policies, products, attitudes, behaviours and/or outlooks in the end user community.
D	Research has engaged with the end user community to address a social, economic, environmental and/or cultural issue regionally within Australia, nationally or internationally.
E	Research has had limited or no identifiable social, economic, environmental and/or cultural outcome, regionally within Australia, nationally or internationally.

In some cases, the research orientation, the discipline and/or the stage of development of a Research Group's research may mean that it would not be appropriate to assess it on the basis of broader impact. In these cases, Research Groups may make a claim in their Context Statement for exclusion from the impact assessment. Assessment Panels satisfied with the claims for exclusion will award a publicly-reported rating of "Not Assessed" for the Research Group.

4.1.10 Reporting

Public reporting of RQF outcomes will be done at a level sufficiently detailed to ensure that information on Australia's research performance is easily accessible to the community and to industry.

Separate RQF ratings for quality and impact will be publicly reported for each Research Group, along with the Research Group's size and discipline focus. Assessment data will be published on a Research Group level not on an individual level. However, it should be noted that members of small Research Groups may be identifiable.

The separate reporting of impact is particularly important to increasing public awareness of the benefits of Australian Government funded research for the wider community. The reporting of impact also reflects the importance of recognising the demonstrably broader social, economic, environmental and/or cultural impact of research.

As part of their reporting obligations and in order to provide a picture of cross-disciplinary research in Australia, Assessment Panels will report on the number of cross-disciplinary Research Groups submitted for assessment, their RFCD combinations and their RQF rating performances.

The total numbers of eligible staff versus staff submitted for assessment for each institution will be reported (4.1.4 refers).

4.2 Funding the Outcomes of the RQF

The Development Advisory Group strongly recommends that, if the Australian Government agrees to go ahead with implementation, RQF outcomes should be used both to distribute all of the existing IGS and an appropriate proportion of the RTS block funding.

The Development Advisory Group subscribes to the EAG principle that high quality basic research continues to be strongly supported. While it is recognised that the relative proportion of funding allocated to impact and quality is a decision for the Australian Government, it is recommended that the overall amount of funding under IGS be increased. This is because the Development Advisory Group believes that the funding system that rewards impact in addition to quality requires augmentation.

4.2.1 Suggested Funding Principles

In order to achieve the goal of rewarding high quality and high impact research, there must be a strong link between the RQF and the allocation of research funding regardless of the Australian Government's decision on additional funding.

The Development Advisory Group has agreed to the following principles to determine funding from RQF outcomes:

1. Funding will be allocated using a relative funding model similar to that of the current research block grants, but based on assessed Research Groups rather than at the level of the total Institution.
2. RQF quality and impact ratings for Research Groups will be separately aggregated to the institutional level for RQF funding purposes.
3. In order to reward high quality and impact research, funding will be distributed with higher weighting for higher RQF ratings in a linear fashion (with the precise gradient to be determined).
4. Research groups rated below "2" for quality will not contribute to an institution's RQF quality funding.
5. Research groups rated below "D" for impact will not contribute to an institution's RQF impact funding.
6. Funding will take into account the cost of the research assessed, possibly based on either RAE or PBRF discipline weightings.
7. Funding will take into account the volume of an institution's research, as measured by its staff FTE assessed for the RQF.
8. Institutions will retain discretion over the internal allocation of RQF-driven IGS and RTS block funding.

Detailed technical work on funding will continue through the early part of 2007.

SECTION 5: THE RQF IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

If the Development Advisory Group's recommendations are accepted by the Australian Government, the following processes must be put in place over 2007-08. These processes will require significant additional funding to cover the substantial costs associated with an assessment exercise based on expert review and to help institutions meet the costs of compliance and continue the valuable work of developing standardised data repositories.

5.1 Key Dates for the first cycle of the RQF

The Development Advisory Group recommends the following timetable for the first RQF cycle. It will be important to adhere to this timetable in order to use RQF results in allocating funding affected by the RQF to the sector in 2009.

Research Assessment Period	1 January 2001 – 31 December 2006
Staff Census Date	31 March 2007
Institutional Submissions Deadline	30 April 2008
Assessment Phase	July/August 2008
Ministerial approval and announcements	November 2008
Funding Outcomes	1 January 2009

The first RQF cycle will assess research outputs over a production period of six years. The time between the first and second cycles of the RQF should be six years, with the provision to run a second cycle sooner if it is recommended through the evaluation of the initial RQF round.

5.2 The RQF Reference Committee

An RQF Reference Committee will be appointed by the Minister for Education, Science and Training for the term of the first cycle of the RQF. This proposed Committee would have external representation to provide the appropriate consultative mechanism for maintaining sector support during this critical phase. One of the Committee's first tasks will be to make recommendations to the Minister on the appointment of Panel Chairs and Members. These Panels will play an important role in developing the detailed criteria and rules by which assessment is governed.

The RQF Reference Committee will oversee the first cycle of the RQF and provide advice to the Minister during this time on:

- the development of RQF Guidelines for approval by the Minister;
- the development of an Information Management System;
- the implementation of the RQF, including possible funding formulae;
- the moderation process to ensure equitable treatment across disciplines;
- the final determination of RQF ratings; and
- the evaluation of the RQF process and outcomes.

5.3 The RQF Information Management System

The RQF Information Management System is to be developed recognising that the Australian Government announced the RQF in conjunction with the Accessibility Framework in May 2004 as part of the *Backing Australia's Ability – Building our Future through Science and Innovation* package.

The purpose of the Research Accessibility Framework is to ensure that information about research and how to access it is available to researchers and the wider community. This is particularly true of publicly-funded research; as a general proposition, it should be accessible to the public.

The Development Advisory Group recognises that many of the projects being supported through the Accessibility Framework are world-leading developments in data repository design and usage, including the management of non-traditional research outputs, copyright and open access issues⁴. Options for the design of the RQF Information Management System will take these developments, and the following principles, into account:

- the RQF Information Management System should be designed to work with the development of research repositories and standardisation of data acquisition, whilst also recognising that research repository and reporting systems in the sector are evolving;
- in the interests of transparency and accountability, the RQF Information Management System should be designed to enable the contents of evidence portfolios and the results of the RQF assessment process to be available at the completion of the process. This information should be made accessible to participating institutions and the wider community, subject to resolution of issues around intellectual property, privacy and ethics being addressed by the Accessibility Framework;
- the RQF assessment process and the design of the RQF Information Management System should include provision for the submission of evidence of non-traditional research outputs such as software development, creative works and designs;
- the sector should be given sufficient advance notice of RQF Information Management System data specifications and submission requirements for the necessary preparation of the Evidence Portfolios for each of the nominated Research Groups; and
- the specifications for RQF data collection, submission, access and retention should recognise the need for cost effectiveness in the sector.

The interoperability of the various elements of the RQF Information Management System will be crucial for managing the workflow for universities and Assessment Panels. In developing the system, the designers should work closely with the sector to ensure that the systems requirements not only build on existing research systems but support other uses of existing data repository systems.

The RQF data gathering process will be designed with awareness that researchers and research managers are called upon to submit different reports on research outcomes and researcher track records to DEST and research funding agencies such as the Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council. The sector, and these two bodies in particular, will be consulted on how to minimise these demands in the process of developing the RQF Information Management System.

The Development Advisory Group recommends that the first iteration of the RQF Information Management System should be designed to be as simple as possible in order to avoid complications in the first round of the RQF and to meet basic requirements while also anticipating and therefore not closing off opportunities for greater functionality in the future.

5.4 Evaluation

The evaluation of the first RQF cycle and the design and functionality of the associated Information Management System will be critical to ensuring that practical improvements are incorporated into the second cycle of the RQF in a rigorous and comprehensive manner. The evaluation process will therefore focus on:

- the operation of the Assessment Panels and the usefulness of Guidelines, templates and other pro forma;
- the rating scales for research quality and research impact;
- the evidence-based statement of impact and the usefulness of panel-specific indicators of research impact;

⁴ The projects that will underpin the Accessibility Framework have been funded from the Systemic Infrastructure Initiative as part of Backing Australia's Ability.

- the supplementary quantitative measures of research quality;
- the possible effect of the RQF on staffing behaviours in Research Groups, particularly the support for ECRs and HDR students;
- the identification and assessment of multi-discipline and cross-discipline research and the encouragement of new fields of research; and
- the technological efficiencies and functionality in the RQF Information Management System and repositories.

5.5 Resources for the RQF

Comparable international research quality assessment exercises indicate that the cost of conducting a peer-based review process is considerable. For example, the total estimated administrative and compliance costs of the 2001 RAE were £77 million over 10 years. The New Zealand experience in implementing the PBRF in 2003 showed that the total compliance and administrative costs ranged between an estimated 14 and 2 per cent of total allocated PBRF funding for the period 2004-2006. Decreases in costs for subsequent cycles of the PBRF are expected to be between one and two per cent of funds allocated⁵.

The Development Advisory Group is also aware of several trials that have been conducted in the Australian research sector and appreciates that the costs of these trials have been high.

Implementation of the RQF, including the process of convening assessors to evaluate the quality and impact of Australian research, must be supported by resources appropriate to ensuring accurate and timely evaluation.

The Development Advisory Group is also aware that the UK RAE will be run in 2008 and that, along with ARC assessments, will mean that the Australian RQF will be in competition for assessors.

Given the timing and compliance costs associated with running the inaugural RQF in 2008, the Development Advisory Group recommends that additional resources be requested from the Australian Government to:

- help the sector meet the costs associated with the RQF, including administrative and staffing support for institutions' research offices;
- support the sector to develop digital repositories;
- fund the cost of running the assessment process, including setting up and servicing Assessment and Moderation Panels and the RQF Reference Committee; and
- design and develop, in consultation with the sector, the RQF Information Management System.

⁵*Phase 1 : evaluation of the implementation of the PBRF and the conduct of the 2003 Quality Evaluation*, Centre for Research on Work, Education and Business Limited, Wellington, New Zealand, 2004, viewed 6 October 2006, http://www.tec.govt.nz/downloads/a2z_publications/eval-of-implementation-pbrf-and-2003-quality-eval-conduct.htm.

FIGURE 4.1: PROPOSED RQF TIMELINE FOR 2007

Date	Event	RQF Information Management System action
Last quarter 2006	<p>Minister approves the Development Advisory Group's Recommended RQF and a process and timeline for implementing the RQF</p> <p>DEST contracts the development of draft RQF Guidelines</p>	DEST undertakes feasibility study and design work for the RQF Information Management System.
31 Dec 2006	RQF Research Assessment Period cut-off date	
First Quarter 2007 Start Process	<p>Announcement of RQF implementation, process and timeline</p> <p>Sector advised to begin building repositories for the RQF (specifications to be finalised in consultation with the sector)</p> <p>DEST advertises for Chairs and Members of the Assessment Panels</p> <p>Discipline workshops are held to develop panel-specific sections of draft RQF Guidelines</p>	<p>DEST undertakes detailed modelling and testing of the RQF process, including the operation of the Information Management System</p> <p>Assessment of sector repository development and potential access issues</p>
31 Mar 2007	RQF Staff Census Date – cut-off point for location of researchers and Research Groups	
Second Quarter 2007	<p>Pre-implementation trials</p> <p>Draft RQF Guidelines released to the sector</p>	DEST develops RQF Information Management System design specifications for tender and/or in-house system build
May 2007	Closing date for Sector feedback on draft RQF Guidelines	
Jun 2007	Ministerial approval and release of RQF Guidelines	
Third Quarter 2007	Commencement of RQF Communication Strategy	RQF Information Management System building and testing commences
Fourth Quarter 2007	<p>Universities requested to provide Expressions of Intention to Submit (EIS) Research Groups</p> <p>DEST and Chairs of Panels consider potential Panel workloads, multi-disciplinary issues and a specialist assessor database</p>	The build and testing of RQF Information Management System continues

FIGURE 4.2: PROPOSED RQF TIMELINE FOR 2008

Date	Event	RQF Information Management System action
First Quarter 2008	Sector assembly of Evidence Portfolios (in an institutional RQF repository)	Assessment of sector RQF repository development and testing of access (if required)
31 Mar 2008	Cut-off date for DEST Higher Education Research Data Collection	RQF Portal opens to institutions to enter data through their Research Office
30 April 2008	Cut-off date for submission of RQF Evidence Portfolios	Research Offices to upload Evidence Portfolios (along with statement of certification)
May-Jun 2008	<p>Validation of Evidence Portfolio submissions</p> <p>Assignment of Evidence Portfolios to Panels and assessors</p> <p>Distribution of discipline-specific metric analysis to Panels and assessors (where appropriate)</p>	<p>RQF Information Management System support to validation</p> <p>RQF Information Management System support to Evidence Portfolio assignment</p> <p>Assembly of Evidence Portfolio listings of work for obtaining required metrics (where required)</p>
Jul-Aug 2008	Assessment phase	<p>RQF Portal opens for assessors</p> <p>RQF Information Management System support to the assessment of research quality and impact</p>
Sep 2008	<p>Panels finalise Quality and Impact scores for Research Groups</p> <p>Moderation Panel undertakes Quality Assurance</p>	<p>RQF Information Management System support for finalisation of scores</p> <p>Derivation of RQF results for reports</p>
Oct 2008	Report RQF outcomes for Ministerial approval	Preparation of RQF website to publish outcomes
Nov 2008	<p>Minister announces the outcomes of the 2008 RQF and approves the outcomes to be published</p> <p>Minister approves RQF funding and initiates an evaluation of the RQF process after the first cycle has been completed</p>	<p>RQF outcomes are published online</p> <p>RQF Information Management System support for funding allocation</p>
2009	RQF Evaluation	Further development of RQF Information Management System and website