

2001 RESEARCH ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Unit of Assessment 11: Other Studies and Professions Allied to Medicine

Overview Report

Unit of Assessment 11 is a broad ranging unit covering the biomedical sciences (including vision science and nutrition), the professions allied to medicine and health promotion. The panel membership reflected a wide range of expertise and experience. Substantial use was made of external specialist advisers.

For each submission a lead and one or more second assessors were approved by the Panel from within the membership. These assessors were selected on the basis of expertise. The research users on the Panel were asked to assess each submission on the basis of the impact or uptake of the research in terms of policy, professional practice or knowledge transfer. The Panel assessors completed jointly draft workbooks based on the published criteria agreed by the Panel. Draft completed workbooks for each submission were circulated to all Panel members in advance of relevant Panel meetings.

At the relevant Panel meeting the lead assessor was asked to introduce and comment on the submission. This was followed by the comments of the second assessor(s) and the research users. The lead assessor was then asked to propose a rating. There followed a general and full discussion involving all of the Panel and a provisional rating was agreed by consensus. All provisional ratings were revisited at the last meeting of the Panel prior to the submissions being sent to non-UK-based experts. Some ratings were altered at this meeting on the basis of reflections on parity of outcome with other similar submissions. All ratings were confirmed at the final meeting of the Panel following consideration of the comments of non-UK-based experts.

The Panel considered a number of multiple submissions from HEIs. These were justified on the basis of university structures and the breadth of disciplines represented in the Unit of Assessment. These were assessed independently. The Panel also received one joint submission. This was assessed in the same way as all other submissions.

Twenty five percent of all outputs were read for each submission. All outputs in outlets with which the Panel was not fully aware of refereeing standards were read by the Panel assessors. The Panel adhered fully to its published criteria in assessing submissions.

There was considerable improvement in the overall quality of submissions in 2001 relative to 1996. This improvement was noteworthy across all sections of submissions and is reflected in overall grades. In particular there was a significant improvement in the quality of submissions relating to the professions allied to medicine, most notably physiotherapy and speech therapy. This resulted in a normal unimodal distribution of grades in 2001 whereas the distribution was bimodal in 1996. The Panel also noted a substantial increase in the number of submissions in the area of health promotion relative to 1996.

A number of institutions have invested strongly in the disciplines represented within Unit of Assessment 11 including the recruitment of high calibre researchers. The strongest submissions were those which demonstrated a clear relationship between overall institutional research strategy and that of the relevant unit/department. Some submissions failed to include in the RA5 sections all of the information requested in the assessment criteria published by the Panel. This was taken account of in determining overall ratings. Some institutions included a number of staff whose outputs were assessed to be at sub-national standard and this was also reflected in the ratings awarded.

The breadth of expertise within the Panel, including that of the research users, was considered to be a considerable strength. Care was taken to ensure that all research was assessed on its merits and as appropriate for the methodologies employed by the disciplines under consideration. Consideration of the data relating to research students, research staff, doctorates awarded and external income also took full account of the disciplines represented and the pattern and need of such support within each discipline and research area represented.

The comments of non-UK-based experts were supportive of the judgements on international standards reached by the Panel. These reflected positively on the credibility and fairness of the processes employed. All members of the Panel took great care in carrying out their work. The Panel worked effectively as a team. While the workload for Panel members was high all agreed that participation in the exercise had been a positive and rewarding experience.

Professor Gerry McKenna
Panel Chairman
December 2001