

RAE Subject Overview

Archaeology

Twenty six Archaeology submissions were graded in the 2001 RAE, exactly the same number as in 1996, and with one exception, from the same institutions. The submissions ranged in size from 1 to 65.9 FTE and 100 per cent of staff were submitted in all but five. Altogether, these included 483 research active 'A' staff, an increase of 112 (30 per cent) on the total submitted in 1996. Compared with 1996, ten Universities increased their rating by one or two grades, 12 maintained their position, while three lost a grade. Whereas two submissions were rated 2 in 1996, no submissions were so rated in 2001. The number of research active staff in 5 and 5* departments more than doubled between 1996 and 2001 from 146 to 329 FTE, accounting for just over two thirds of all staff submitted. Whereas staff in departments graded 4 or lower in 1996 accounted for about 40 per cent of the total, this ratio declined to about 30 per cent in 2001.

The number of studentships awarded by OST Research Councils and the Arts and Humanities Research Board rose very substantially, from 183 between 1992 and 1996 to 257 between 1996 and 2000, an increase of 40 per cent. The rate of awarding of doctoral degrees at 0.18 per staff FTE is comparable with, for example, Classics (0.16 per staff FTE), History (0.19 per staff FTE) and History of Art, Architecture and Design (0.22 per staff FTE). This notable achievement has to be seen in the context of the 30 per cent increase of new, young research active staff.

Even allowing for inflation, research income almost doubled between 1992-96 and 1996-2000. Total earnings in RAE 2001 amounted to over £41 millions, the equivalent to over £80,000 per staff FTE, of which £7.5 millions (18 per cent) was accounted for by grants from OST Research Councils, Arts and Humanities Research Board, JIF and JREI, the equivalent of about £12,000 per staff FTE. Much archaeological research, particularly fieldwork, requires some form of external funding and so this increase in research income has been vital in underpinning the expansion in research activity. The total compares with that of some £22 millions in RAE 1996, where the proportion of funds derived from OST Research Councils was similar to that in RAE 2001. Likewise, the proportion, some £20 millions, awarded by UK central government bodies and UK industry, commerce and public corporations in RAE 2001 was the same as in 1996. This higher figure can, in part, be related to the work of the professional archaeological units attached to some institutions which extends beyond the scope of the research of staff submitted.

The statistics reveal a flourishing discipline with significant numbers of new academic appointments and young staff entering employment in the assessment period. The panel was impressed that young appointments were already making an international impact through their research, a view echoed by the views of the non-UK advisers. There was no doubt, too, that the range of research had increased significantly, both thematically and in terms of global coverage. Work of international quality was found in every submission. The panel noted evidence of a revitalisation in certain areas, particularly in environmental archaeology, where major issues, such as climate change, social

complexity and economic intensification, were being addressed, as well as a confidence to invest in and develop new directions, such as archaeogenetics. In general, and in a context where the majority of institutions supported a broad portfolio of research expertise, there was a perception that archaeological science as a whole had continued to develop and to attract resource appropriate to its needs. Equally the panel was impressed by the quality of published field projects which showed the subject was addressing clearly articulated mainstream issues, often on a regional scale. There was less confidence, however, that applied research was meeting the needs of the user community or that it was making a significant impact. The panel was particularly concerned over the extent and quality of artefact-based research and felt that this was an area in which the whole archaeological community would benefit from renewed investment.

While the ratings awarded by the panel in 2001 can be seen as a measure of the vitality and strength of Archaeology, this is only part of the picture. The publications of archaeologists from a wide range of subject areas represented by the panels of Anthropology, Classics, Ancient History Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Earth Sciences, English Language and Literature, Geography, History, History of Art, Architecture and Design, and Middle Eastern and African Studies were also referred to the Archaeology panel for its views. Similar strengths were found in these referrals to those in the submissions to the Archaeology unit of assessment. By the same token, the panel gratefully acknowledges the assistance of a substantial number of specialist advisors from fields of expertise ranging beyond those of the panel. This advice contributed very helpfully to the process.

Looking to the future, the panel felt that the discipline was well placed to build on the achievements registered in 2001. It will continue to generate exciting, well-founded research of relevance and importance which will thereby continue to command the interest and engagement of students and the wider public.

Michael Fulford
Panel Chair