

RAE 2001

UoA69: Sports-related Subjects

Overview

There were the same number of institutions (34) submitting to this Panel in 2001 as in 1996. However, research active A/A* staff submitted increased by 36 per cent representing a substantial increase in research activity. Similarly, average levels of research student completions and research income had increased, with substantial increases for some institutions.

Overall the quality of submissions was higher than in 1996. This was partly due to many institutions with low grades in 1996 choosing not to submit in 2001. For instance, of the nine institutions awarded grade 1 in 1996, only one of them submitted to this panel in 2001. No grade 1's were awarded in 2001. At the other end of the distribution, five 5*s were awarded in 2001 compared to none in 1996. This was due to substantial increases in both the quantity and quality of research activity shown by these institutions, often following substantial investment in this subject area.

Another feature of RAE 2001 for UoA 69 was the large number of institutions submitting to this panel for the first time. Again this normally followed substantial strategic investment by these institutions in this subject area. Many of these institutions have great potential for producing high quality research activity over the coming years. Institutions working in this area are now producing a substantial number

of high quality PhDs and many of these graduates are finding academic positions in this expanding sector of higher education.

The Unit of Assessment covers a wide area ranging from sport science to social science research in sport and leisure (including tourism).

Within the sport sciences there exists a clear hierarchy of journals with those at the top having a consistent high quality of articles. In the social science study of sport and leisure, there is as yet not such a clear hierarchy of journals with many journals containing research outputs of inconsistent quality. Researchers are faced with the possibility of publication in specialist journals in the sport, leisure and tourism areas or alternatively the possibility of publication in mainstream disciplinary journals. At the moment there is a more consistent quality in the latter than the former. The Panel felt that this was a problem for the subject area.

Within the sports science area, the Panel felt that the best research in the UK is acknowledged to be also the best internationally. There is, however, still a wide range of quality of research outputs. The panel felt that some areas of sport science research were under-represented in the submissions, mostly notably sports medicine, sports engineering, and physical education although it was acknowledged that research activity in these areas was likely to be submitted to other panels. The continued growth of the 'Exercise Sciences' as opposed to 'Sports Sciences' was apparent and reflects the increasing acceptance of 'exercise as medicine'. Some concern was expressed, particularly by those Panel members representing researcher users, that not enough attention is paid to dissemination and implementation of research outputs. There was a danger that some research is undertaken in a

vacuum without reference to a policy or practice environment outside the academic journal arena.

Within the Social Sciences, Unit 69 covers a large number of fields of study within the social sciences including leisure, sport, tourism, physical education, outdoor education, law, management, policy. The 2001 submission suggests that research is increasingly becoming focused within the areas of sport and tourism. There appears to be a trend away from research into leisure as a broad multi-disciplinary area of study into the more focused area of sport and tourism. Only 5 institutions showed evidence of outputs most readily identified as leisure research. An example is the move from leisure management and leisure policy research into sport management (and to a lesser extent tourism management) and sport policy. This may be a function of the development of the area of study or it may be that they are represented within other RAE Units (eg arts policy, environmental issues, education etc). If they are not evidenced in other areas this could be a worrying trend for social scientific research in this area.