



J Cutshall
1E
Department for Education & Skills
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

13 October 2006

Dear Jim Cutshall

The University and College Union (UCU) is pleased to enclose our response to the DfES consultation paper on the reform of higher education research assessment and funding.

Rather than responding to the fairly narrow consultation questions, our submission takes the form of a mini-report. This report reflects the questionnaire responses from over 1500 academic and academic-related staff on a range of research-related issues, including the future of the 2008 RAE, the concentration of funding and the role of the research councils. The UCU questionnaire also asked a number of questions about core values, including the relationship between research and teaching and between universities and business. The final section covered more specific issues around the evaluation of research, including the role of peer review and different 'metrics' such as research income and citations.

In terms of the DfES review, the message of the questionnaire is unequivocal - 81% of respondents do not support the government's 'metrics-based' proposals. A host of different higher education organisations have also expressed major concerns about the nature and timing of the current consultation document. As a result, the UCU calls on the government to abandon the metrics proposals and to return to the drawing board. There is an urgent need to widen the remit of the current review to include a proper examination of research funding and to consider all the assessment options for a post-RAE world.

As part of our own consultation exercise, the UCU held a special conference on research assessment and funding on the 12th October. Over 70 representatives from universities and professional bodies engaged in a detailed discussion of the government's review of research assessment. We are disappointed that there was no DfES presence at the conference as it was a good opportunity for government officials to hear the views of ordinary academics. In our view, the current review has failed to properly engage with HE practitioners and that the next stage of the process must involve genuine consultation within a realistic deadline. We also believe that the composition of the metrics working group should be widened to include proper representation from the higher education sector.

Yours sincerely

Sally Hunt
UCU Joint General Secretary

University and College Union

The future of research funding and assessment: the 'voice of the profession'

Introduction and summary

This report outlines the views of academic and academic-related staff on issues of research funding and assessment. It is based on the responses to a questionnaire aimed at members of the academic profession working across the UK higher education sector.

The background to the questionnaire is the government's review of research assessment and its proposals for a mainly 'metrics-based' approach. The response from the profession is clear:

- **Nearly 81% of respondents do not support the government's plan to move to metrics in assessing research.**

At the same time, there is widespread opposition to the current peer review based RAE:

- **41% of respondents favour scrapping the 2008 RAE.**

Instead, the profession would welcome the opportunity for an informed debate about the future direction of HE research:

- **96% back the call for a fundamental and longer-term review of funding.**

A proper review of research funding will need to explore all the options. The questionnaire results show that the principles of an alternative assessment and funding model might include:

- a commitment to the continuation of the 'dual support' system;
- a commitment to peer review assessment of research quality;
- reduced levels of selectivity, particularly in arts & humanities and social sciences;
- opportunities for all academics to engage in research and scholarship;
- the importance of recognising and rewarding the dissemination of research through teaching.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that the government is struggling to obtain academic support for its metrics proposals. It points to the need for a proper long-term review of research funding and the different forms of evaluation methods that could be used to underpin research funding.

UCU questionnaire results and commentary

Introduction

This report outlines the views of academic and academic related staff on research funding and assessment. It is based on the questionnaire responses from over 1500 academic and related staff working throughout UK higher education and represents a contribution to the current government-led debate on the future of research assessment (see appendix a for the full results).

The University and College Union (UCU) represents further and higher education lecturers, managers, researchers and many academic-related staff such as librarians, administrators and computing professionals across the UK. It is critical that the ‘voice of the profession’ is heard in the debate on the future of research assessment in higher education, and not simply that of the ‘great and the good’. The report outlines members’ views on a range of research-related issues, including the future of the 2008 RAE, the concentration of funding and the role of the research councils. The UCU survey also asked a number of questions about core values, including the relationship between research and teaching and between universities and business. The final section of our questionnaire covered more specific issues around the evaluation of research, including the role of peer review and different ‘metrics’ such as research income and citations.

Metrics

In June 2006 the DfES and the Higher Education Funding Councils published their proposals on the reform of research assessment and funding.¹ In the report the government comes out firmly in favour of replacing the RAE with a ‘metrics-based’ system for assessing research. All of the five funding models in the DfES report are based wholly or mainly on different types of research income metrics. These metrics include income from the Research Councils, EU, charities, UK Government, NHS, and domestic and international businesses. The proposal is for these metrics to apply only to subjects in science, technology, engineering, and medicine (STEM), although with a strong steer for all disciplines to move towards more quantitative assessment methods.

The UCU survey asked members for initial views on the government proposals:

Table 1: Do you support the government’s plan to move to metrics in assessing research?

	No	Yes
Post-1992 university	83.9%	13.3%
Pre-1992 university without a medical school	81.2%	17.9%
Pre-1992 university with a medical school	79.4%	19.0%
Total	80.9%	17.3%

Responses may not sum to 100% because of blank responses.

The figures reveal significant scepticism about the proposed introduction of a ‘metrics based’ system. This scepticism is shared by all respondents – regardless of

institutional affiliation. For example, it is interesting to note that only 13.3% of respondents in post-1992 universities support the proposal – despite the fact that a number of these institutions might benefit from the new methodology.²

The picture is more complex in the different subject areas. Perhaps unsurprisingly, academics in the humanities, art and architecture, performing arts, law and the social sciences are particularly hostile to allocating Quality-Related (QR) research funding on the basis of grant income. For example, 91.8% of academics in the humanities – one of the biggest group of respondents - do not support the government's proposals. The inappropriateness of a quantitative, income-based methodology for these subject areas is central to this critique. As one academic put it:

“The metrics as currently conceived of will reward success in research funding above almost anything else - but not all research needs large-scale funding. This is particularly true in the humanities, where quality should be measured by what is produced, not how it is funded.”³

Within the sciences, the picture is more varied. Negativity about the government's approach drops to 64.6% for staff within science and engineering departments. At the same time, the opposition to metrics is much higher in both medicine & dentistry (81%) and in mathematics & statistics (92.3%). Although the latter is unsurprising (under metrics, pure mathematics research could lose nearly £7m a year and applied maths £10.4m), medical research is perhaps the biggest winner under the DfES proposals.⁴

Overall, the government's current proposals lack credibility and legitimacy – even within the STEM subjects. A number of respondents feel that *'metrics are a poor proxy for research quality'* and an *'exceedingly limited way to measure research activity'*. Concerns are also expressed about the ability to finance or publish research in unorthodox or controversial fields. For example, in the view of one academic:

“Metrics would inherently lead to discrimination against, and marginalisation of, non-mainstream publications where some of the most interesting theoretical research takes place.”

In a similar vein, another respondent felt that:

“As presented, the plan seems to allow for too much emphasis on income-generating research, thus potentially compromising academic freedom and certain types of academic activity. It could also polarise universities into research only and teaching only.”

There is also a fear that, by tying all research funding to the ability to win grants from the major funders, could result in more 'short-termism' in university research. In particular, the government's metrics approach may make it even more difficult for universities to move to greater use of permanent contracts and/or to avoid redundancies in the future.

Many of these concerns have been registered by independent organisations such as the Higher Education Policy Institute.⁵ A range of representative bodies such as Universities UK and the Royal Society have also expressed reservations about the official consultation document.⁶ **The UCU calls on the DfES and the funding councils to pull back from their metrics proposals and examine the full range of options for a post-RAE world.**

RAE 2008

In the original Budget statement, the Treasury floated the possibility of metrics being introduced as a replacement for the 2008 RAE. Given the level of staff time and effort devoted to preparing for the RAE, the proposal caught the sector by surprise. The questionnaire asked for views on the future of RAE 2008:

Table 2: Do you agree that the RAE 2008 should go ahead?

	No. It should be scrapped	Unchanged	Unchanged but allow a later move towards metrics-based funding	Unchanged but allow a longer term review of research assessment and funding
Post-1992 university	42.4%	10.6%	2.1%	43.6%
Pre-1992 university without a medical school	43.8%	12.0%	3.2%	39.3%
Pre-1992 university with a medical school	39.4%	14.7%	2.9%	42.1%
Total	41.3%	13.2%	2.8%	41.6%

Responses may not sum to 100% because of blank responses.

The most favoured option is for the 2008 RAE to remain 'unchanged but [to] allow for a longer-term review of research assessment and funding'. To some extent, this may reflect a desire for stability within the sector after a period of constant upheaval; it also rests heavily on a more fundamental inquiry into the future of research funding. At the same time, a virtually identical number of respondents call for the 2008 RAE to be abandoned. For example, 41.3% favour scrapping of the current RAE – with the figure rising to 63% amongst staff in specialist university institutions. The government's current preferred option – that the RAE 2008 should be go ahead unchanged but with a later move towards metrics-based funding – is supported by only 2.8% of respondents.

Overall, these figures highlight the high level of hostility towards the RAE. A key problem has been the concentration of QR research funding caused by the highly selective RAE methodology. For example, in 2003-04, 75% of QR funding went to 25 higher education institutions. Concerns about current levels of research selectivity are reflected in the questionnaire results. For example, 75.8% of all respondents either agree or strongly agree that existing RAE funding is 'too concentrated in a small number of higher education institutions'. There is some variation here between institutions, for example the figures are 92.4% for post-1992 university respondents compared to 67.6% for their counterparts in Russell Group institutions.⁷ In addition, the figures throw up some interesting differences between subject areas. For example, 47% of all respondents either agree or strongly agree that there is 'a strong case for heavily concentrated research funding in the sciences, engineering and medicine'. This highlights the need to develop more sophisticated subject specific approaches to research funding.

Respondents are largely critical of the impact on the RAE on the research culture in UK higher education. For example, over 87% agree that contemporary funding

mechanisms promote 'a short-termist, competitive funding environment that gets in the way of innovation in research'. There is a widely held view that research funding *"tends to follow short-term 'headline topics' and neglect core strategic long-term objectives where sustained effort over a long period of time is crucial"*.⁸ Likewise, only 17% of respondents believe that existing RAE funding 'promotes a healthy competition which guarantees that excellence is rewarded'. This positive support for the RAE – albeit a minority view – comes out particularly strongly in the open-ended questions. A number of respondents argue that the RAE is a relatively transparent process compared to either the historical situation or the experience of other countries. For others the RAE has *"raised the standard of British research"* and *"transformed...many previously non-research active staff and departments into environments that are now highly energetic, more productive and with much better morale."*

Despite these positive statements, a large number of respondents appear to be opposed to the RAE. Hostility to the process extends into the pre-1992 sector, including within Russell Group institutions (39% of staff in these universities favour abandoning the 2008 RAE). One of the reasons for this is the growing evidence that universities are adopting an 'ultra-selective' approach to RAE submissions.⁹ Such an approach is contrary to the advice of the higher education funding councils who have consistently claimed that the new rules "put an end to the situation, produced by the previous rating scale, where an HEI might consider leaving one or more established researchers out of a submission to ensure that it achieved a higher grade and possibly received more funding".¹⁰ **If the 2008 RAE is to go ahead as planned, the UCU calls on the funding councils to enforce the new rules and to insist on the implementation of institutional codes of practice on RAE submissions. We also call on universities to establish 'no detriment' procedures for staff excluded from the submission process.**

Long-term review

The questionnaire results on the 2008 RAE suggest that academic staff are keen for a change – but that metrics are not the right change. One of the problems with the current DfES review is the decision to confine the issue to a narrow, technical discussion about different research income metrics. The government's report is lacking in details on the reasons for this policy shift:

"The first thing to be said about the consultation document is that it contains just 25 pages, fewer than 10 of which are devoted to discussion of the proposals. It contains no analysis of the problems associated with the RAE or the metrics alternatives, and provides no basis for policy decisions. It asks which of 5 metrics-based models is preferred, but as will be discussed below all suffer from similar flaws and there is no basis in the document for making a judgement between metrics and peer review."¹¹

Rather than a brief, top-down consultation exercise on metrics, we believe that there is a need for a wider review of research funding and assessment, including its impact on teaching and on other activities. This position is broadly endorsed by the findings of the questionnaire: 96% of respondents support the call for a fundamental and longer-term review of research funding and assessment.¹² The reform of research assessment is a complicated process and in the words of Universities UK, 'it will take time if we are to have a robust replacement to the RAE which has the confidence of

the academic community'.¹³ **As a result, the UCU calls on the government to widen the scope of its review and the composition of its working group – to include practitioners as well as government and funding council representatives.**

Dual support

In the recent consultation document the government expressed its commitment to the continuation of the 'dual support system' of research council project funding and funding council distributed QR funding. However, it has been suggested that the introduction of Full Economic Costing for research projects with an income-led metrics system would effectively spell the end of the funding council arm of dual support. It is interesting to note that influential organisations such as the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) have already come out in favour of such a policy shift.¹⁴

The questionnaire asked respondents for their views on the future of the dual support system. In total, 66.9% of respondents said they support the current system, although there was some strong criticism of the impact on employment conditions (i.e. *'the method of allocating funding discriminates against FTC researchers'*). However, only 26.8% favoured allocating all funding via the research councils and other grant making bodies like charities. These findings suggest that there is little academic support for radical proposals to dismantle the dual support system.

Core Values for funding Research

The government is currently consulting the higher education sector over its reform proposals. Unfortunately, the consultation questions are largely focused on different varieties of research income metrics. In order to broaden out the debate, we asked a number of questions about the core values for funding research in higher education. The results are outlined in table 3.

Table 3: Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements

	strongly agree	agree	disagree	Strongly disagree
15. Research funding should be connected to the assessment of the quality of research	31.9%	53.5%	10.5%	3.1%
16. Research funding should allow all academics to engage in research and scholarship as well as teaching	51.2%	34.0%	11.8%	2.4%
17. Research funding should recognise and reward the dissemination of research through teaching	37.0%	41.7%	16.5%	4.0%
18. Research funding should prioritise research that is directly beneficial to business and the public	3.6%	18.4%	49.7%	27.4%
19. Research funding should protect and promote blue-skies research regardless of its immediate application to business	54.1%	40.0%	4.0%	1.2%

Unsurprisingly, the results reveal a huge level of support (94.1%) for funding that protects and promotes 'blue-skies' research. This commitment to basic, speculative or even 'unfashionable' research clearly remains a cornerstone of academic identity. The importance of the intrinsic intellectual value of the research being done also comes out strongly in the open-ended responses to questions on the evaluation process (question 21). A number of respondents argue for the recognition of a *quality of originality and creativity* that they clearly feel is not necessarily captured by the current peer-review process, or in the proposed metrics. This is variously termed: *originality; innovation; cleverness; ground-breaking; inspiration; adventure, quality; whether its interesting; imaginative; risk-taking; claims to shift paradigm; promise and novelty; "wow"; sheer unmitigated brilliance*. These responses suggest a desire to celebrate a sense of excitement about the best research, and a reaffirmation of academic values in a climate that fosters a bureaucratic response to evaluation.

There is also - predictably perhaps - a strong belief that funding should allow all academics to engage in research and scholarship as well as teaching. One of the problems with the current distribution of research funding is that large numbers of academic staff are effectively unable to pursue a genuine programme of research. This is counterproductive in terms of staff morale as recent studies have shown that issues such as autonomy to undertake research and scholarship are at least as significant as pay in determining staff satisfaction.¹⁵ In addition, a number of respondents feel that the UK research culture could benefit from a wider range of contributors. For example, in the view of one respondent:

"There must be a certain allowance for some research to occur independently of external funding. Otherwise research will be marginalised to a few big names. Moreover these big names become the grant reviewers and journal editors and become a self serving clique that blocks further research that is inconvenient to their own agenda."

Support for a wider distribution of research funding also chimes with the belief that there should be a greater emphasis on 'capacity building' rather than simply rewarding 'past winners'. As one respondent commented:

"We need Higher Education funding mechanisms to recognise potential, to value all funding sources, and to contribute to growth of a budding area, not sink the majority of funds into established research groups."

More surprisingly, the questionnaire shows that the overwhelming majority of respondents (85.4%) believe that research funding should be connected to the assessment of the quality of the research. It suggests that academics are keen for some form of public accountability for their work and that there is little desire for a return to the 'flat rate' per capita approach of the 1970s.

The results reveal a degree of scepticism about prioritising so-called 'third leg' funding. For example, only 22% agree or strongly agree that 'research funding should prioritise research that is directly beneficial to business and the public'. However, in the open-ended questions a number of respondents stress the value of 'impact' factors in the evaluation of research. And whilst industry and business are mentioned as important end-users of research, the responses collectively make the argument for a broad, social and ethical understanding of research impact. Factors cited include research that can demonstrate a contribution to: *sustainable lifestyles; value to society; public policy relevance; impact on social well-being; care of the*

environment; addressing serious quality of life problems; usefulness in culture and community; developing societal values; international co-operation, value and interest; care of marginalised groups. Although these include a range of factors that would be difficult to assess and compare on a rigorous and objective basis, one can also read these kind of responses as the opportunity to reassert the factors that practitioners themselves really think are important about their research and that should be seen as of value by government and the tax-payer.

Finally, the questionnaire responses reveal strong backing (78.7%) for funding that recognises and rewards the dissemination of research through teaching. As one respondent put it:

“We also need value to be placed on integrating research into practice - frequently through teaching - as this is a major way of ensuring the benefits of research are passed on to the general public.”

The current RAE has tended to marginalise both pedagogic research and discipline based research on higher education teaching. In addition, there are legitimate concerns that a narrow metrics approach would accentuate the divide between research and teaching in higher education. An alternative approach should examine the ways of strengthening research-teaching links.

Evaluating Research

The final section of the survey looked more specifically at research evaluation. We asked whether respondents would also support ‘the assessment of research if it were unconnected to funding allocation’. The overwhelming majority (69.6%) believe in the assessment of research, thus reaffirming the belief that academics see research as a peer and public activity.

The questionnaire also asked a more detailed question about the methods of evaluation. These are outlined in table 4.

Table 4: What method of evaluation would you favour? (rank in order of preference: 1,2,3,4,5, where 1 = most preferred and 5 = least preferred)

Percentage responding 1 (most preferred):

a. Allocation based on grant funding	8.0%
b. Citation indices/bibliometrics	13.7%
c. Peer review for all subjects	56.9%
d. Peer review for arts and humanities subjects only	14.2%
e. Other – please specify	27.6%

The preferred option - supported by 56.9% of respondents - remains subject-based peer review. Peer review is not perfect, but is widely understood and generally respected within the academic world. It is also a relatively cost effective way of

making use of existing expertise and of spreading knowledge of research activity among academic colleagues. The position of ‘qualified support’ is best summarised by one of the responses in the open-ended section:

“The present system has disproportionately favoured some large institutions, and the overall impact of the RAE has been destructive to higher education. I do favour a system of peer review, but the present system is too much tied to cuts in funding, and a system of metrics would have all the disadvantages and none of the advantages of the present imperfect system.”

A number of respondents feel that reforms should be made to the peer review system, for example, by opening up panels to a wider group of academics and stakeholders, greater anonymity in the application process and by better regulation of the practices and procedures of commercial publishers. Nevertheless, these findings suggest that peer review must remain central to a performance-based approach to funding. It is certainly seen as essential in judging the quality of research in the arts and humanities – as well as in the social sciences. For example, 14.2% of *all* respondents stress the importance of academic review for these disciplines.

In terms of quantitative indicators, ‘quality’ metrics such as citations are generally preferred to ‘input’ metrics such as research income. The government’s consultation document does not specifically address citations or bibliometrics – although it has been referred to in the separate review of metrics for the arts and humanities.¹⁶ In line with the response to question 5, grant funding metrics appear to be the least favoured option. However, there is more support for a combination of peer review and metrics evaluation methods (see below).

The second highest response (27.6% of respondents) in table 4 is for ‘other’ evaluation methods. Broadly speaking, there were three main suggestions:

Combination of peer review and metrics

The majority of suggestions under “other” were for a combination of peer review and metrics. Peer review was mentioned frequently, with additional suggestions that it be *streamlined, simplified* and changed in terms of who are considered peers - for instance *practitioner peers, blind peer review, and research council peer review*. There were also suggestions to involve a wider spectrum of people and organisations in the evaluation of research, such as *independent panels of leaders in non-academic contexts; expert panel not involved in research e.g. representatives from industry, public; DTI etc, other bodies not simply peers*. The need for a combination of methods was stressed, in part as a means of reducing *game playing*.

Impact

A number of respondents wanted “impact” of various kinds to be factored into methods of evaluation. This included impact on end-users, on business and industry and also impact on the academic community in the form of academic colleagues, post-graduate and other students. Suggestions included more general impact and dissemination: *Input into teaching at all levels; dissemination through innovative and effective teaching methods; research informed teaching; public impact and dissemination; and also more specific measures such as patent; copyright; take-up of research artefacts (software, hardware, devices, methods etc)*. There were a number of references to the importance of “usefulness” and to the relevance of research to professional practice.

None of the above

A number of respondents said they wanted *none of the above*, either because they favoured a flat rate handout of funding to academics, or to institutions, and departments to be allowed to get on with making their own decisions about research, or because they despaired of finding meaningful ways of assessing research: *It is all pointless because no-one has the expertise to make any meaningful comparisons across the board; leave funding levels as they are now; very difficult to do; there must be a better way than any of the above; anything's got to be better than item a!* (allocation based on grant funding); *something more like the Roberts Review proposals.*

Open-ended comments

The final section of the questionnaire asked respondents for generalised comments about research funding and assessment. A large number of respondents focus on the RAE and the current system of funding. In line with the statistical data, these tend to be mainly critical observations, with frequent references to the impact on the research culture, employment conditions and the status of teaching in higher education. A number of respondents also stress the lack of total research funding as the main problem in UK higher education. In addition, there are very few positive statements in favour of metrics, particularly the 'input' indicators outlined in the government's consultation paper. In fact, respondents tend to prefer the status quo to a purely 'metrics based' approach and a minority of these responses offer favourable judgements on the RAE and the current policy of research concentration.

In terms of alternative methods for assessing and funding research, a variety of different approaches are proposed. A small number of respondents favour a return to versions of the non-competitive, per capita approach that existed before the arrival of the RAE in the 1980s. Some of these versions offer a 'radical' perspective on the research policy process:

"What is needed is long term continuous slowly evolving stable funding mechanism decoupled from short-term continuously changing arbitrary assessment metrics of whatever type. What I would suggest is a full blown democracy of all academics in all universities determining the allocation of research funds without the interference of external bodies: government, commerce, charities, military and industry etc."

A larger number of respondents seek to reconcile notions of 'accountability' with a more pluralistic funding and assessment regime. These tend to involve a mixture of assessment methods alongside a renewed emphasis on funding research potential – via core funding - and a broader set of evaluation criteria. The following two comments provide a useful summary of these perspectives:

"We need to have a multi-faceted system that rewards productivity, impact, dissemination, quality (through peer review) and grants funding. There should, however, also be some base-line funding of research for all research-active departments."

"It needs to cater for all sectors of research in HE; value all research of quality that has a genuine impact on practice rather than that which sits in 'high quality' journals that few practitioners read; recognise the need for diversity in output relevant to the field; as well as supporting those who are new to research."

One particular theme is the perceived 'intrinsic' link between research and teaching and need to recognise this in any assessment process:

"My preferred option would be for universities to be held accountable for the public money they receive by having their teaching and research measured together. These are our two core functions. We hear much about 'research-led universities' - the implication is that teaching and research are - or should be - inextricably linked. It makes no sense to assess research and teaching separately."

At the same, there is a strong belief in the need for greater simplicity ("*Whatever process is put in place it needs to be much less time consuming for the people involved*") and above all for higher education professionals to be allowed to get on with their research unhindered by the demands of "*short-term bean counting*".

Overall, the open-ended responses stress the complexity of the issues involved in the assessment and funding of research and highlight the diversity of views within the academy. The results underline the difficulties in reaching consensus on a fully-fledged technical replacement to the RAE but also the inherent problems in rushing to adopt simple, mechanistic 'solutions' as proposed in the government's consultation document.

Appendix A: Questionnaire results

Profile

1 UCU membership

Total respondents: 1,554

92% were UCU members

2 Gender

Female	38%
Male	62%

2A Grade / employment function

Academic	91%
Academic-related	9%

3 HEI type

Post-1992 university	21%
Pre-1992 university without a medical school	20%
Pre-1992 university with a medical school	55%
Other	4%

4 Subject (academics only)

Art & Architecture	2.5%
Business	4.2%
Education	3.7%
Health & psychology	5.7%
Humanities	19.8%
Information technology	4.7%
Law	2.0%
Leisure & tourism	0.3%
Management & economics	3.6%
Mathematics & statistics	3.5%
Medicine & dentistry	3.4%
Performing arts	2.0%
Science & engineering	23.9%
Social sciences	13.1%
Social work & social policy	0.9%
Other	6.8%
Total	100%

Commentary on profile data

In total, 1554 academic and academic-related staff responded to the on-line questionnaire between July and September 2006. Given that the consultation had to take place during the summer, this was a reasonable response. In terms of gender, the male: female split (62:38) was broadly in line with the academic profession as a

whole (59:41 in 2004-5).¹⁷ In terms of employment function, the academic: academic-related split (91:9) was also broadly representative of the UCU membership in higher education. In terms of subject coverage, there was a relatively good mix of different core disciplines. For example, major cognate areas such as science and engineering, arts and humanities and the social sciences were all well represented. However, the respondents were disproportionately from the staff in pre-1992 higher education institutions (75% in total). This over-representation may reflect the fact that research assessment is a much more pressing issue in the pre-1992 universities.

Research policy

5. Do you support the government's plan to move to metrics in assessing research?

	No	Yes
Post-1992 university	83.9%	13.3%
Pre-1992 university without a medical school	81.2%	17.9%
Pre-1992 university with a medical school	79.4%	19.0%
Total	80.9%	17.3%

Responses may not sum to 100% because of blank responses.

6. Do you agree that the RAE 2008 should go ahead?

	No. It should be scrapped	Unchanged	Unchanged but allow a later move towards metrics-based funding	Unchanged but allow a longer term review of research assessment and funding
Post-1992 university	42.4%	10.6%	2.1%	43.6%
Pre-1992 university without a medical school	43.8%	12.0%	3.2%	39.3%
Pre-1992 university with a medical school	39.4%	14.7%	2.9%	42.1%
Total	41.3%	13.2%	2.8%	41.6%

Responses may not sum to 100% because of blank responses.

7. UCU is calling for a fundamental and longer-term review of research assessment and funding. Do you support this?

Yes 96.0%

No 3.5%

Responses may not sum to 100% because of blank responses.

8. Should the main objective of a fundamental review be to secure increased research funding for all higher education institutions?

	No	Yes
Post-1992 university	18.5%	79.7%

Pre-1992 university without a medical school	33.4%	65.3%
Pre-1992 university with a medical school	35.2%	62.4%
Total	30.8%	67.2%

Responses may not sum to 100% because of blank responses.

	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
9. Existing RAE funding is too concentrated in a small number of higher education institutions	34.4%	41.4%	19.7%	3.2%
10. There is a strong case for heavily concentrated research funding in the sciences, engineering and medicine	11.5%	35.5%	38.0%	12.9%
11. Existing RAE funding promotes a healthy competition which guarantees that excellence is rewarded	3.0%	14.0%	47.6%	34.7%
12. Existing RAE funding promotes a short-termist, competitive funding environment that gets in the way of innovation in research	55.9%	31.2%	10.3%	2.0%

Responses may not sum to 100% because of blank responses.

Options for the future

13. I support the current 'dual support' system of Research Council project funding and funding council distributed research funding

Yes 66.9%

No 29.9%

Responses may not sum to 100% because of blank responses.

14. I would support all funding being allocated to projects by the Research Councils and other grant making bodies like charities.

Yes 26.8%

No 70.0%

Responses may not sum to 100% because of blank responses.

Core Values for funding Research

	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
15. Research funding should be connected to the assessment of the quality of research	31.9%	53.5%	10.5%	3.1%
16. Research funding should allow all academics to engage in research and scholarship as well as teaching	51.2%	34.0%	11.8%	2.4%

17. Research funding should recognise and reward the dissemination of research through teaching	37.0%	41.7%	16.5%	4.0%
18. Research funding should prioritise research that is directly beneficial to business and the public	3.6%	18.4%	49.7%	27.4%
19. Research funding should protect and promote blue-skies research regardless of its immediate application to business	54.1%	40.0%	4.0%	1.2%

Evaluating Research

20. I would support the assessment of research if it were unconnected to funding allocation

Yes 69.6%

No 27.8%

21. What method of evaluation would you favour? (rank in order of preference: 1,2,3,4,5, where 1 = most preferred and 5 = least preferred)

Percentage responding 1 (most preferred):

a. Allocation based on grant funding	8.0%
b. Citation indices/bibliometrics	13.7%
c. Peer review for all subjects	56.9%
d. Peer review for arts and humanities subjects only	14.2%
e. Other – please specify	27.6%

End notes

¹Department for Education and Skills, *Reform of higher education research assessment and funding*, June 2006. The consultation paper can be downloaded from the DfES website:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/conDocument.cfm?consultationId=1404>.

²Anna Fazackerley, 'Metrics deliver a costly blow to the elite', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 16 June 2006. The impact of the five models on institutional funding is downloadable from:

<http://www.thes.co.uk/upload/2030677/Proposed%20research%20funding%20reforms.pdf>.

³Open-ended response to question 5, 'Please give your reasons'.

⁴Donald Macleod, 'Research funding changes 'undercut science and maths'', *Guardian Unlimited*, 15 June 2006.

⁵Tom Sastry and Bahram Bekhradnia, *Using metrics to allocate research funds: initial response to the Government's consultation proposals*, Higher Education Policy Institute, 23 June 2006.

⁶Universities UK, 'Universities UK sets out principles for future of research assessment funding', 26 September 2006; Royal Society, 'More work needed on proposed changes to way UK research is funded', 17 August 2006.

⁷The open-ended responses also throw up the occasional positive statement in favour of research concentration. For example, in the view of one respondent - "*The only sensible approach is to concentrate the funds on research intensive universities, rather than spread it evenly throughout the higher education system.*"

⁸Open-ended response to question 23, 'If you have any other general comments about UK research funding and assessment then please use the following space'.

⁹Lee Elliot Major, 'RAE 2008: only the very best need apply', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 22 September 2002.

¹⁰Higher Education Funding CE, *Initial Decisions by the UK Funding Bodies*, paragraph 49.

<http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2004/01/rae0401.pdf>

¹¹Sastry and Bekhradnia, page 1.

¹²In another question on this issue, 67.2% of respondents agree that 'the main objective of a fundamental review be to secure increased research funding for all higher education institutions'. The figures vary from 79.7% in the post-1992 institutions to 62.4% in the Russell Group.

¹³Universities UK sets out principles for future of research assessment funding'.

¹⁴Wendy Piatt, *Diverse Missions: Achieving excellence and equity in post-16 education*, Institute for Public Policy Research, September 2004.

¹⁵Hilary Metcalf et al, *Recruitment and Retention of Academic Staff in Higher Education*, DfES, Research report RR658, 2005.

¹⁶HEFCE/AHRC, 'HEFCE and AHRC announce expert group on research metrics', 4 July 2006.

¹⁷HEFCE, *The higher education workforce in England – a framework for the future*, 12 July 2006.