



Report of DASSH ADR Network Pre-Conference Day Hobart, Wednesday August 31, 2016

The ADR Network held a very productive meeting immediately prior to the 2016 DASSH conference. The event was attended by approximately 25 Associate Deans (Research) in the HASS disciplines from universities in Australia and New Zealand.

The agenda focused on four main items.

1. Outcomes and discussion of working party report: Research Activity in Staff Workload Models

Speaker: Prof. Andrew May, University of Melbourne (chair of working party)

At the 2015 DASSH conference, the network established a working party to gather information about the way in which research is incorporated into workload models across the sector. The working party, chaired by Prof. Andrew May, subsequently conducted a survey to ascertain how research activity is currently taken into account in staff workload models in the HASS disciplines within universities.

Prof. May presented the results of the survey, preceded by a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. The working party received responses to the survey from 12 different universities. These varied considerably in length, and some were broken down into different disciplinary practices within the same institution. There was a great deal of variability in responses. The relatively low response rate reflected in part the survey's focus on a point-based system, which is not used in all institutions.

In the ensuing discussion, the Network clearly felt that there is value in continuing with the survey to gather more data, and in particular in re-doing the survey to include more targeted questions, with a view to producing a report for the DASSH board, similar to the 2013 pilot survey that targeted the Deans of Science.

2. Measuring research impact and engagement – panel discussion

Chair: Prof. Andrew Wells, PVC Research, University of Tasmania

Panel members: Mr. Mark Hochman, Division of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, University of Tasmania; Dr. Julianne O'Reilly-Wapstra, Office of Research Services, University of Tasmania

Prof. Andrew Wells introduced and chaired a panel discussion centred on the following questions:

- How do we measure research engagement and impact?

- What are the consequences of doing this, particularly as this will probably be done in a metric/financial way than in a social way?
- What is the impact for the HASS disciplines?

In their presentations, Mr. Hochman and Dr. O'Reilly-Wapstra highlighted the important distinction between engagement (exchange of knowledge) and impact (demonstrable contribution beyond academia). In other words, engagement is not a proxy for impact. Moreover, engagement is to be measured using metrics, while impact will be assessed by case studies. This approach has worked well in the latest REF in the UK, particularly for the HASS disciplines. A strong narrative will be very important in preparing case studies for the 2018 ERA round. Dr. O'Reilly-Wapstra argued that an impact measure based on CAT 2-4 income would be transferable across FOR codes, including those in HASS Disciplines. It was noted in questions, however, that while this approach might be effective in highlighting institutions that had particular success in income generation, there was little variation in returns for the rest of the sector.

3. Challenges and opportunities for HASS research training in the post-ACOLA, -Watt and NISA policy landscape

Speaker: Prof. Denise Cuthbert, Convenor, Australian Council of Graduate Research

Prof. Cuthbert gave a presentation on the future directions for research training in the HASS disciplines following the recent ACOLA and Watt reviews, and the National Innovation and Science Agenda. In it, she highlighted the following key issues:

- The HASS disciplines are a key provider of research training. However, some important challenges are: (1) engaging with industry through research training; (2) publishing during the PhD candidature; (3) improving poor completion rates, especially on-time completions. To improve the latter, it is important to capture HDR information (load, completions, attrition).
- The Watt review has made recommendations about making supervisors more accountable. In a recent discussion paper, the NSW ombudsman highlighted a systemic failure in research supervision.
- The Watt review has also recommended an amalgamation of the current RTS, APA and IPRS schemes. Universities will need to determine the optimal mix of these schemes, e.g., number of scholarships versus amount of research funding. In addition, the RTS (HDR 50%, publications 30%, Cat 1 grants 20%) has now been changed to the RTP (HDR 50%, Cat 1-4 grants 50%), so there is a greater focus on industry engagement.
- Although Australia punches above its weight in terms of research outputs, it clearly punches below its weight in terms of working with industry, especially in the context of PhD research. To address this, it is important to look at the narrative around the work that is being done, because there may be more industry engagement than we currently capture. One avenue for getting PhD students to engage with industry is to tap into opportunities from alumni not working in the higher education sector.
- The ACOLA review found that 98% of PhD graduates are employed, 50% of whom are employed outside of academia.

4. Grant and research priority areas: How can HASS disciplines position themselves well?

Open discussion

The Network held an open discussion, which focused on a range of issues, including:

- Emulating successful research practices in STEM disciplines
- Collaborating with STEM disciplines
- Greater collaboration among HASS disciplines
- Cultural models of change in HASS (e.g., co-publishing, conceptualising research as an incremental endeavour)
- Articulating the importance, value and benefit of HASS research
- Cohort supervision of Honours and HDR students

Wrap up and Agenda Setting

It was agreed that the following issues should be placed on the agenda for the DASSH ADR Network Satellite Event in April/May 2017, which will be hosted by the University of Queensland:

- Continuation of the project on research activity in staff workload models
- Outcomes of the ERA 2017 impact trial
- Strategies for cohort supervision in HASS disciplines

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