



Report of DASSH ADR Network Pre-Conference Day La Trobe University, Bundoora Campus, Wednesday September 13, 2017

The ADR Network held a very productive meeting immediately prior to the 2017 DASSH conference. The event was attended by approximately 25 Associate Deans (Research) in the HASS disciplines from universities across Australia.

The agenda focused on the following four main items.

1. Field of Research Code 19 – Studies in Creative Arts and Writing

Speaker: Prof. Peta Tait, Emeritus Professor, La Trobe University

Prof. Tait shared her knowledge and views on FOR code 19 based on her experience on the ERA 2010 (trial) and 2012 panels. She began her presentation with a brief run-down of the subsumed fields at the 4-digit level, making a distinction between fields that focus on art theory (i.e., 1901) versus practice/performance (i.e., 1902, 1904, 1905), and those that focus on both scholarship and practice (i.e., 1903). She further highlighted that the various kinds of performance (e.g., drama, theatre, music) subsumed under 1904 are not the same thing, but that only a specialist would know that.

Prof. Tait noted that although NTRs have a similar framework to that of traditional outputs, they also have a 250-word accompanying research statement. However, there have been lots of problems with these statements (e.g., too many questions in the research background section, no references in the methodology, writing is not tailored to a non-specialist audience, no information on grant funding). More generally, with regard to NTRs, research questions can be content-based (e.g., a documentary on drug addiction) or focus on form (e.g., analysis of the genre or innovative form of a production).

Prof. Tait's presentation subsequently focused on the decline in the evaluation of FOR code 19, both in terms of quantity and quality (very few publications were judged to be well above world standard). This was specifically in 1903 and 1904, less so in 1901 and 1902, which benefited from conventional scholarship and strategic planning, respectively. Possible factors that contributed to this decline were:

- Technical reasons; you cannot submit a single output for ERA evaluation; instead you need to submit a portfolio of several pieces
- Internal reasons: (a) there are comparatively more junior staff in creative arts (less esteem than in other areas); (b) unlike books, creative outputs are not weighted, despite taking equally long to produce; (c) you shouldn't/cannot include your students' work in your portfolio (unless it is pedagogy); (d) professional activities (e.g., playing in a bar) are not research (however, they sit under engagement/impact)

More generally, evaluations within FOR code 19 are not a level playing field (e.g., you can send a musical recording or a painting to an international exhibition in a way that you cannot readily do with a theatre production).

The final part of Prof. Tait's presentation centred on the issue of what can be done about the decline in the evaluation of FOR code 19. Specifically:

- The 250-word statements need to be refined
- There is a need for disciplinary experts, especially at the 4-digit level
- Group portfolios strategically (e.g., thematically, chronologically)
- Ensure the presentation of NTROs is physically pleasing
- Be sure to include grants – such as Arts Grants - and esteem factors¹

2. Engaging with industry partners, philanthropic organisations and private entrepreneurs

Conversation with Prof. John Fitzgerald, Swinburne University of Technology

Prof. John Fitzgerald introduced and led an open discussion on Impact and Engagement informed by his role as President of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. Issues discussed included:

- The case study model used in the recent ERA pilot works well for HASS
- Engagement metrics need to be comparable across disciplines. These metrics serve STEM well, but less so for HASS. Thus, such metrics need to be produced and argued for HASS (e.g., audience attendance, HASS scholars who sit on boards and influence policy).
- On OECD tables Australia punches above its weight on research but well below on industry engagement and commercialised outcomes; however, there is no evidence for a link between metrics around engagement and translation of outcomes.
- Philanthropic dollars are currently not included in Engagement because they are regarded as insignificant; however, that is exactly why they should be counted so as to encourage behavioural change.
- Relatedly, a stronger case could be made for philanthropy because it is critically important in the translation of pure research to commercial outcomes, more so than industry engagement (in the US industry engagement is around 6% and philanthropy around 30%). HASS does quite well with the philanthropic dollar.
- In-kind contributions are not counted, because they are easy to game, but they are an important indicator of engagement, especially in HASS. We should continue to push for their inclusion.
- End-users are poorly defined (e.g., researchers/educators in the tertiary sector and clinical practitioners are excluded, but these are important end users for Education and Sociology/Health research).
- Success with engagement comes from interdisciplinary projects which require HASS and STEM to work together; however, this is difficult to reconcile with the silo / FOR code based structure of ERA.
- The scoring system for both Impact and Engagement (i.e., 1 = limited; 2 = emerging; 3 = mature) is very limited.
- There appears to be little correlation between ERA scores and Impact & Engagement scores.
- This fits with the distinction between excellence cohorts and impact cohorts at institutions and suggests that it is not just about translating excellent research but rather that it is different people who are doing the engagement.

¹ But N.B. ERA 2018 draft guidelines indicate the exclusion of esteem factors from the assessment.

- There are great opportunities for HASS in service industries, NGOs, etc.; this creates career paths, but these forms of engagement, and the work put into establishing and maintaining partnerships need to be recognised in workloads.
- Industry engagement requires that researchers take the perspective of the industry partner (e.g., how can the partner benefit from your research?).
- HASS has the responsibility to put metrics in place that can capture engagement on a daily basis, including by academics (e.g., press release).
- HDR training needs to include the provision of skills to embark on alternative pathways to engage with industry.

3. Contract cheating: Educational integrity and research integrity

Speaker: A/Prof. Cath Ellis, University of New South Wales

This session was held jointly with the ADLT Network.

A/Prof. Ellis began her presentation by dividing academic integrity into education integrity on the one hand and research integrity on the other hand. The former pertains to undergraduate and postgraduate courses, whereas the latter pertains to HDR students and researchers. HASS focuses predominantly on educational integrity (e.g., plagiarism), whereas STEM focuses predominantly on research integrity.

A/Prof. Ellis then defined the main concept of her presentation, contract cheating as procuring a third party to produce academic work, usually assessable, for submission. This could involve a financial transaction, or even a sexual one. A/Prof. Ellis next described the findings of her OLT funded survey on contract cheating which was conducted in a very large sample of staff and students across 8 universities. Some of the main findings were:

- 6% of students engage in contract cheating; these are mostly male, international, engineering students
- Other important factors that contribute to contract cheating are: (a) language other than English, (b) dissatisfaction with the learning environment, and (c) opportunities to cheat
- Only 13% of students paid for contract cheating
- There is a lot of exam cheating (proxy sitting at invigilated exams), which is not due to cultural differences
- Essays can be purchased from websites such as Essay Shark; the average price for an 8-page undergraduate assignment with a 7-day turn-around is +/- US\$150; all transactions occur via the internet
- Although pricey, it is cheaper for a student to pay for an essay than to repeat the subject
- Producing essays is a lucrative business for writers, who often reside in developing countries and can make more money that way than in the public service
- Among the Field of Education Codes, the hotspots for purchasing essays were business and social sciences
- Staff and students differed in their concerns about contract cheating
- HDR students also engage in contract cheating; all aspects of the thesis are being contract cheated, including purchasing one or more thesis chapters (or even an entire thesis), draft doctoral proposals, ethics applications, outsourcing data collection as

well as fabricating and falsifying data; this raises serious issues around ethics and privacy

- HDR students are under pressure to complete and staff are under pressure to take on more students; these conditions add to the risk of contract cheating – including to supervisors whose data and reputations could be damaged by, for example, students sending confidential project data to an external site to have it analysed or written up
- Responsibility rests with HDR supervisors to make sure students are aware of the risks of contract cheating; students often see it as a victimless crime and need to be educated about the risks to their peers, the institution and the public
- Contract cheating is contagious and therefore needs to be nipped in the bud; student counselling needs to be tailored to one-off versus repeat offenders
- Universities need to be vigilant about contract cheating; it is a sector-wide problem

4. Quality of Non-traditional Research Outputs – open discussion

Chair: Prof. Alan McKee, University of Technology Sydney

Prof. McKee put forward a proposal to run a Delphi panel survey of researchers and research leaders involved in assessing NTROs. His rationale for this proposed DASSH project is that FOR code 19 is the only one in which the average score has gone down in each ERA round. The survey would target the key types of NTROs (creative arts, entertainment, design, architecture, journalism) and focus on two key questions: (1) can bad art be good academic research, and (2) can the distribution venue be used as a proxy for the quality of academic research. An advisory group from key stakeholders (DASSH, Council of Deans of Creative Arts, ARC College of Experts, ERA panels) would be approached to prepare a list of Delphi panel members to be surveyed. In terms of outcomes, the survey would provide insight into how the quality of NTROs is determined (i.e., criteria used to judge the quality of NTROs).

The ADR Network supports this project. Prof. McKee will put it forward to the DASSH Board.

The ensuing discussion among the Network members focused on the following issues:

- Retrofitting research onto creative practice
- Problem with exegesis driving creative work
- Venue is a broad concept
- There are other NTROs beside art, e.g., reports; relatedly, what might be a proxy in design; there are different NTROs in different disciplines; do the criteria for art works transfer to other outputs in areas such as design and architecture?
- Survey as many people as possible who assess NTROs to better understand how decisions about research quality are made in Australia
- Additional questions to include in the survey could be the following
 - What works as a 250-word accompanying statement?
 - Was there any external funding?
 - Was it reviewed?
 - What was the afterlife of the work – did it get an award, were there invitations for additional opportunities?
 - Did it generate disciplinary or other responses?
 - Did it change the discipline in any way?
 - Does there need to be a clear research statement?

- How important is the visual presentation and aesthetics of the package?
- How important is the institutional statement?
- How important is prior knowledge of the institution?
- Issues to consider with regard to the overall format and structure of the survey:
 - Need to provide assessors with a carefully crafted statement about the objective of the survey and why they are being asked to participate
 - Suggestion to start with a series of statements as a test benchmark
 - Suggestion to provide assessors with a list of criteria and asking them to rank these in order of importance when assessing the quality of NTROs
 - Need to repeat the questions for different cultural areas and types of NTROs; relatedly, assessors will vary in their experience of assessing different types of NTROs and may vary in how they assess different types of NTRO
 - Need to guard against response bias and social desirability bias
- Outcomes of the project will provide useful feedback to universities and researchers on the parameters that feed into a quality NTRO
- Prof. McKee seeks to produce a report on the survey. Following further discussion with several ADR Network members during the DASSH conference he will also endeavour to publish its findings, which will require a priori ethics approval. Prof. McKee will draw on the expertise of other members of the Network as necessary. He further indicated that he would report on the progress of the project at the next pre-conference ADR Network day

Wrap up and Agenda Setting

It was agreed that the following issues should be considered as agenda items for the DASSH ADR Network Satellite Event in April/May 2018:

- Further discussion of Impact and Engagement
- Category 2, 3 and 4 grants, including commissioned research
- Changes in research training for HDR students (auditing of RTS funding, co-funding, industry scholarships, named/advertised scholarships)
- Research career training for ECRs in HASS
- Research integrity guidelines and the role of ethics committees
- Setting up good systems to support consultancies

Claire Smith proposed to put forward for consideration to the DASSH Board that ‘culture’ be put back into the definition of Impact for the ERA evaluation.

Eva Kemps introduced Alan McKee as the new ADR Network Convenor.

Alan McKee and the ADR Network members thanked Eva Kemps for her work as the Convenor.

Eva Kemps, Flinders University, and Susan Martin, La Trobe University