

## POLICIES AND ASSOCIATED PROCEDURES

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POLICY NAME:	Research Activity Index (RAI)
DATE APPROVED:	7 May 2010
POLICY TYPE AND CATEGORY:	ACADEMIC (Academic and Educational)
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
FIRST EFFECTIVE DATE:	27 November 2006

### 1.0 PURPOSE

To establish a meaningful benchmark and guideline by which to measure quality research productivity and activity.

To provide a definition of 'research active' in respect to Victoria University's Workloads – Academic Staff policy [clause 47.3] wherein workloads are impacted by determination of either a research active or non-research active academic status.

This policy outlines the procedures and processes for determining research active status for academic staff in Higher Education within the University.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND

The University requires a definition of 'research active status' in order to interpret and further develop the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) processes and workload determinations of the Academic Workloads Committee's deliberations.

The RAI will move to incorporate research quality measures based on research quality assessment systems developed by relevant national funding /assessment bodies and Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA). Weightings will also now be applied to collaborative research and competitive grant income.

The ability to establish a meaningful benchmark and guideline by which to measure research productivity and activity at both national and international levels has become essential for all universities seeking to demonstrate research quality, activity, identity and status. To progress our own institutional knowledge and identity and to

participate in new research quality assessment processes effectively, we need to refine our understanding of what is required at VU to become a research active staff member.

Based upon advice from across the higher education sector we have established our 'research active' indicators at a level typical and commensurate with our capabilities and needs and with the sector's direction in general.

This policy refines the original 2006 RAI policy which was developed with the advice and help of the Associate Deans (Research & Research Training) and includes more robust quality drivers. The Research Activity Index (RAI) relies upon an aggregation of three years of reported research data submissions to the VU Research Office based upon required national reporting guidelines. This index provides the capacity to develop a broad benchmark for a minimum level of research activity and is provided in the form of a table which weights calculations across a wide range of research related activities including external income from research, DIISR recognised publications, successful doctoral and masters by research completions and co-completions. There are numerous exemptions, recognitions and interpretive recommendations included in the policy – recognising career variation and allowing the varied work of the University to be recognised in areas including creative endeavours.

The RAI is foremost a means of profiling the University's research productivity, potential and areas of strategic strength or concern in respect to both quality measurement imperatives and our strategic research goals. It also provides a capacity for supervisors and managers to identify areas requiring support, resourcing or strategic intervention and for them to better manage the allocation of their research resources and unit research profiles.

### 3.0 DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Research active status at Victoria University for individual academics is to be determined by use of a Research Activity Index (RAI) calculated from a given 3 year period of reporting research outcomes to the VU Research Office.
- 3.2 RAI calculations are based upon achieving demonstrated outcomes in research & external income generation, DIISR recognised publications. Publication quality metrics are based on approved quality measures. Successful supervision and completion/co-completion for research higher degree students is embraced in the weighted calculations.
- 3.3 The current RAI for achieving a research active status is as follows:

Appointment Level	RAI Benchmark
Level A	0.5
Level B	1.0
Level C	2.0
Level D	3.0
Level E	4.0*

\* Level E staff cannot achieve the benchmark solely through HDR completions.

#### 4.0 KEY WORDS

Research Active;  
 Research Active Status;  
 Weighted RAI calculations;  
 Research Quality;  
 Research Activity Index (RAI);  
 Academic Workload Points (AWP).

#### 5.0 POLICY

##### 5.1 Statement of how an RAI is achieved

Individuals (other than Level E academics) may achieve recognition as 'research active' by attaining the required Research Activity Index (RAI) points total in only one of the designated categories given. Conversely, a more typical way of achieving a research active rating would be acquired through a combination of activities across the RAI spectrum of categories: external research income; DIISR recognised publications; successful higher degree completions/co- completions.

The RAI attainment levels and categories will be subject to regular periodic review and amendment.

For Level B academics a base line of research activity leading to a research active status of 1 or greater is required. RAI points gained over 3 years in any one (or any combination of) categories are based upon the following standard:

External Research Income	Publications	Completions			
		Research Doctorates	Masters by Research	Honours (> 70% research)	Non-research Professional Doctorates
\$45,000.00	3 publication points	1	1.5	3	1 2008 and earlier 2 2009 No allocation 2010

Interpretation: Gaining research and grant income of over \$45,000 in the specified 3-year period would give a level B academic a research active status based upon gaining an RAI of 1. Alternatively, producing 3 appropriately recognised publications or supervising 1 completion or being co-supervisor of 2 completions would also lead to a positive Research Activity Index of 1.0. A combination of activities (eg co-completion, publication and research income generation) can also lead to gaining a positive RAI outcome. Typically, a combination of contributions across the designated categories will be the most balanced way of scoring a research active RAI rating.

### Quality weightings

External research income: National competitive grants or category one income, such as ARC and NHMRC grants, will attract a quality weighting of 1.25. Publications: Quality publication metrics, based on external measures approved by the DVC(Research) or nominee, will be applied to publications, including conference publications. Quality weightings are provided in [Schedule 1](#). Conference publications, unless explicitly named in the quality publication metrics approved in [Schedule 1](#), will be weighted at 0.25 compared to other publications.

Research books where a rigorous peer-review process can be demonstrated, may be awarded additional points equivalent to the author weighted points. These points are available regardless of whether the book meets the commercial publisher criteria of the Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) specifications. Books must meet the HERDC requirements with regard to research.

### Collaboration weightings

External research income: Grants with multiple chief investigators (or equivalent) will attract a weighting of 1.25.

Publications: All publications with multiple authors will attract a weighting of 1.25.

### Supervision weightings:

Completions: Co-supervision of research completions is weighted at 0.5 of the completion value for principal supervision.

Examples to assist in interpretation are provided in [Schedule 2](#).

Incrementally higher levels of contribution are required from academics as they progress from Level A to Level E status.

## **5.2 Variables, Exemptions & Reduced RAI Categories**

5.2.1 Special provisions are made for Level A and B academic staff who are new to the University in the workloads model. Regardless, all academic staff new to the University have the opportunity to calculate an RAI based on previous research activity. Grants and publications submitted from the time of taking up an appointment at VU will normally need to have the researchers affiliation identified as VU if the researcher is to include them in RAI calculations.

5.2.2 Academic staff who have moved between Levels A, B, C, D or E during the assessment cycle will be assessed on a pro-rata basis reflecting their date of promotion within the assessment period. Similarly, the RAI will be adjusted for part-time employment, and extended periods of leave during the reference period based on data supplied by HR. No adjustment will be made for SSP which is approved for research related activities. These adjustments are to be made by the relevant Executive Dean.

5.2.3 Research outputs used to calculate RAI scores should be consistent with the most recent HERDC specifications where these are relevant. HDR completions data must be consistent with the Office for Postgraduate Research data. Normally HDR completions that cannot be credited to VU will not be counted

Material accepted for the Creative Works Collection will be considered equivalent to material from the HERD collection. Documentation may be required to support any other claims.

- 5.2.4 Researchers may request RAI recognition for other substantial verifiable research outputs. These requests should be made through the relevant Associate Dean (Research & Research Training) and require approval by the DVC (Research) or nominee. Research outputs likely to be approved includes patents, books chapters reporting original research but lacking a commercial publisher, expert submissions to government enquires.
- 5.2.5 Where a significant administration load (eg, Head of School, etc.) is a relevant factor in a staff member's ability to contribute to a positive RAI, this will be taken into account by relevant Executive Dean.
- 5.2.6 Sessional staff members will be exempted.
- 5.2.7 The compilation of the RAI will reflect only staff who have submitted their research data to the University.

## **6.0 PROCEDURES**

### **6.1 Applying the RAI**

- 6.1.1 The RAI database will be maintained by the VU Research Office who will provide Senior Officers of the University, including Executive Deans and Heads of Schools, with data and analyses (relevant to their sphere of operation) drawn from the RAI tables.
- 6.1.2 Individuals seeking to learn their RAI status may access their own information through a password protected site.
- 6.1.3 RAI information on the attainment and performance of any given individual will be (a) available to the individual concerned (b) be available to that individual's Head of School, Executive Dean or designated supervisor, (c) staff authorised by the relevant Head of School to administer academic workloads.
- 6.1.4 Data aggregated to the school/centre/institute level may be distributed within the University. Data will not normally be published at a more detailed level.
- 6.1.5 The RAI will be calculated on an ongoing basis, typically being updated as soon as DIISR verified data pertaining to publications and grant income become available to the University. Deadlines may be set by the DVC (Research) for receipt of other relevant documentation to ensure RAI is available in a timely manner.
- 6.1.6 VU Research Office will inform the University on an annual basis when the RAI database is updated.

*"The current official version of this policy is maintained on the Victoria University Central Policy Register and downloading and printing of this policy will produce an uncontrolled copy which may not be current."*

6.1.7 VU Research Office will provide service to staff and their supervisors in assisting the interpretation and analysis of these data where appropriate or refer staff to the relevant Associate Dean (Research & Research Training) and /or Executive Dean.

6.1.8 These RAI data are given as an aid to assisting supervisors and managers determine issues and strengths in the research contributions of their areas of operation. They also provide individual academics and researchers with a benchmark by which to interpret their own research performance.

6.1.9 Interpretation by individuals and their supervisors of any individual's RAI points is most likely to be benefited by reference to clause 5 (above) and any relevant negotiated workload and performance development processes of the University.

## **7.0 CONGRUENCE WITH LEGISLATION AND RELATED POLICIES**

University's Strategic Plan 2004-2008

AWC requirement to define workloads differentiated by research active and non-research active status.

## **8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Policies consulted in the development of this document include:

Newcastle University Research Policy

Workloads – Academic Staff (Victoria University Policy)

Groups consulted:

New Generation University RQF Pilot Research Cluster.

University Research Committee, Research Development Committee, Faculty Research Committees

## **9.0 CONSULTATION**

Education and Research Board (For consultation October 2007).

Research Committee (November 2009 for revisions)

Research and Research Training Management Committee (December 2009 for revisions)

Research Committee (February 2009 for revisions)

## **10.0 REVIEW**

24 monthly review by Office for Research and Research Committee.

## **11.0 ACCOUNTABILITIES**

### **11.1 Responsibility**

DVC (Research)

### **11.2 Implementation Plan**

The dependence of the RAI on retrospective data requires careful management of implemented changes to the Policy.

Implementation of Quality and Collaboration weightings: These will be applied in the first instance to 2008 research outputs. Research outputs produced prior to this will be recognised using the 2006 Policy formula.

Changes to output weightings (peer-reviewed books) introduced with the 2009 policy review will apply to 2009 and subsequent outputs. Changes to section 5.2 will apply in 2010.

Allocation of points for supervised completion of non-research professional doctorate is being phased out. Reduced points will be awarded for 2009 non-research professional doctorate completions, and non-research professional doctorate completions from 2010 will not attract any RAI points.

RAI points for Honours completions will be restricted to Honours programs with a research component of greater than 70%. This applies to 2009 and subsequent completions.

Changes to the points awarded for peer-reviewed books will apply to books published in 2009 and subsequently.

## **12.0 POLICY ADVISOR**

Director, Office for Research

## **SCHEDULE 1: Quality Weighting for Research Publications**

For journal articles published in 2008, rankings will be based on the 'draft ERA journal ranking list' released by the ARC in 2008, and the 'final' ranking lists released by the ARC for the Trial ERA submissions in 2009.

The ARC will be releasing a ranking of peer-reviewed journals covering all disciplines, and a ranking of refereed conference publications in a limited set of disciplines for use in the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) program. This is expected to be released in February 2010. These 'final' ERA rankings will be used to rank journal and conference publication outputs published in 2009.

### Ranked Journal Weightings:

A*:	6
A:	4
B:	2
C or unranked:	1

### Ranked Conference Publication weightings:

A:	4
B:	2
C	1

Ranked conference weightings are only applicable to publications in disciplines matching the Field of Research (FoR) codes assigned to conferences in the ranked journals list.

Unranked conferences will be weighted at 0.25



## SCHEDULE 2: Examples to assist in interpretation

### Example 1: simple example

Within the 3 year reference period, an Academic level B staff member has 2 journal papers published. He is the sole author on both papers. One of the journals is listed in an 'A' rank in the ERA list. He was also 1 of 2 chief investigators on a grant for which a total of \$20,000. All outputs occurred in 2008.

Output	Units (A)	No. of contributors (B)	Output weighting (C)	Quality weightings (D)	Collaboration weightings (E)	RAI (F)
Journal paper 1 (rank 'A')	1 awp	1	0.33	4	1	1.32
Journal paper 2 (unranked)	1 awp	1	0.33	1	1	0.33
Grant income	\$20,000.00	2	1/45,000	1	1.25	0.28
<b>Total</b>						<b>1.93</b>

Formula:  $F = A / B \times C \times D \times E$ .

This staff member has reached the benchmark for Level B of 1 and will therefore be considered research active.

Example 2: example showing phased in implementation

An Academic level D staff member has 2 journal papers published. She is a co-author on both papers and both have an A\* ranking; the first was published in 2007, the second in 2008. She also has received grant income of \$37,000 in 2006 and 2007, and a further \$15,000 in 2008, all from a grant on the Australian Competitive Grants register. The staff member also had a PhD student that she had co-supervised, complete in 2008.

Output	Units (A)	No. of contributors (B)	Output weighting (C)	Quality weightings (D)	Collaboration weightings (E)	RAI (F)
Journal paper (2007)*	1 awp	2	0.33	1	1	0.17
Journal paper (2008)	1 awp	2	0.33	6	1.25	1.25
Grant income (2006 -2007)*	\$37,000.00	1	1/45,000	1	1	0.82
Grant income (2008)	\$15,000.00	1	1/45,000	1.25	1	0.42
PhD completion (co-supervisor)	1 completion	1	0.5	1	1	0.5
<b>Total</b>						<b>3.15</b>

Formula:  $F = A / B \times C \times D \times E.$

This staff member has reached the benchmark for Level D of 3 and will be considered research active in 2010.

\* Quality and collaboration weightings do not apply to outputs prior to 2008

Example 3: example showing adjustment for reduced time fraction

An Academic level C staff member has an un-adjusted or raw RAI of 1.33. HR data indicates that the staff member's FTE time fraction for the reference period is 0.89 ( ie 32/36 = 0.89) which takes into account 4 months of extended sick leave during the reference period. It does not take into account 6 months of research related SSP in the reference period (the staff member contracted malaria during a stopover in Vietnam on the way home).

The adjusted RAI for the staff member is  $1.33/0.89 = 1.49$ . This is not sufficient to reach the Level C benchmark so the staff member will not be research active. The staff member can apply for research transition status and prepare a research development plan to access some workload points for research.

#### Example 4: example showing adjustment for promotion

An academic has an un-adjusted or raw RAI of 1.33 and maintains this for 3 years. This academic was promoted from Level B to Level C effective from the 1st May, 2007.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Adjusted Benchmark} &= (A / 36 \times Y) + (B / 36 \times Z) \\ \text{where } A &= \text{months in reference period prior to promotion} \\ B &= \text{months in reference period after promotion} \\ Y &= \text{RAI benchmark prior to promotion} \\ Z &= \text{RAI benchmark after promotion} \end{aligned}$$

So for the 2005 - 2007 reference period the expected RAI benchmark for this academic is

$$(28/36 \times 1) + (8/36 \times 2) = 1.22.$$

In the following year (2006 - 2008) reference period the benchmark will be

$$(16/36 \times 1) + (20/36 \times 2) = 1.55,$$

and the following year (2007 - 2009 reference period),

$$(4/36 \times 1) + (32/36 \times 2) = 1.89.$$

While the academic's RAI was sufficient to be research active in the first year after promotion, they will not continue to be research active unless they can increase their RAI.

If necessary the RAI score can be adjusted using the adjusted benchmark value:

$$\text{Adjusted RAI} = \text{raw RAI} / \text{Adjusted benchmark.}$$

In this example, the adjusted RAI value for the 2005 – 2007 reference period would be

$$\text{Adjusted RAI} = 1.33 / 1.22 = 1.09$$