



REAC minutes, Wednesday 06 September 2023, 9:30-12:00

Location: Room 101, Rannís, Borgartún 30, or connect to the session electronically

In attendance: Philip Winn (chair), Christian Schulze, Sara Stef. Hildardóttir, Anna Guðrún Edvardsdóttir, Elín Díanna Gunnarsdóttir, Finnborg Salóme Steinþórsdóttir, Kristján Kristjánsson, Hulda Stefánsdóttir, Ingibjörg Gunnarsdóttir (representing UI in absence of Halldór Jónsson), Piergiorgio Consagra, Sigrún Lilja Einarsdóttir, Skúli Skúlason, Kasper Kristensen (online).

QB Secretariat: Þorgerður Edda Hall (minutes)

Observer from the QB: Crichton Lang

Apologies: Halldór Jónsson

(1) Minutes of the last meeting (15 May 2023) and Matters Arising.

Approved with modifications. Finnborg Salóme Steinþórsdóttir was added to the list of attendees.

(2) For information

i. Update on IRIS.

SSH gave an update on the previously reported technical challenges. The new system is being set up and the old system will run simultaneously. The main challenge is the technical transfer of information already in the system to the new PURE community model. There is also an issue with the financing and negotiating costs with Elsevier.

ii. Update on the Evaluation System of the Public Universities.

No update.

iii. Update on work of Ministerial committee charged with proposing changes to the funding model of the universities.

A new funding model is to be tested this year. At the time of the meeting there was no information on how research is factored into the model. SSH reports she has been in contact with the Ministry regarding access to bibliometric data. EDG reports that the Science and Innovation Council has gotten information which seems to suggest that factors such as publication, open access, citations and external grants will be used in the model. There seem to be a range of metrics, but most likely no qualitative indicators. REAC had a critical discussion about this in December 2020. REAC's concern was that this approach would not reflect the reality of the universities' strengths with regard to research across subjects (conventional bibliometrics do not capture all subjects equally well) or the societal impact of research. There is more information from the Ministry due in September.

Discussion about REAC's role in influencing policy and addressing sectoral issues: In March 2024 REAC will have a new Chair who will bring a fresh perspective to bear on research evaluation. REAC will continue to discuss sectoral issues and policy but always keeping in mind the Board's impartiality on these. The Board is interested in the quality management of provision and the management of research but does not make value judgements. It is however important that REAC members bring issues from the meetings into their institutions. The QEF can also be used as a tool for the Icelandic institutions to point out sectoral issues, for example through thematic analysis at the end of each QEF cycle.

iv. **News from the Science & Innovation Council.**

EDG reports that the first meeting was held in the new council. It was mostly an introduction on the new rules and laws of the council. There was also some discussion on what the council should be focusing on, but it was a broad discussion.

(3) Research Assessment webinar and workshop

i. Making the Most of IRIS – webinar update.

The webinar is cancelled until the issues with IRIS become clearer. REAC will hopefully be able to return to this early in 2024

(4) Items for discussion

i. **Update from the QB.**

The Quality Board is planning to change its name. The provisional name is Icelandic Agency for Quality Assurance. This is to allow a clearer governance structure with the Board and the Secretariat, as well as the distinction between the agency and the QEF. This is also important in terms of becoming an accredited quality agency by ENQA.

ii. **Management of research in QEF3.**

In QEF3 there will be two elements: External Quality Assurance (EQA) and Internal Quality Assurance (IQA). EQA consists of the Institution-wide review and Annual Quality Dialogues. IQA is up to the institutions (no specific requirements of SLRs, the format of IQA is up to each institution). IQA will be monitored through the Annual Quality Dialogues.

Through feedback on QEF2 it has become clear that the management of research is appreciated, and the institutions would like to continue to include this in the EQA process. In QEF3 the management of research will be included in the overall review outcome.

Discussion about societal impact of research: the University of Iceland has published a website about societal impact of research. <https://sar.hi.is/en/>

Commentary from REAC on the EQA handbook:

- The approach on research in the EQA handbook will shift the university's mindset from thinking individualistically on research to thinking more institutionally and strategically. The vision is good but there are a lot of things in there that institutions do not have in place yet. This will hopefully push the universities in the right direction.
- Chapter 4.2 captures the discussion REAC has been having very well. Item 3 about integrity and ethics should be elevated and be the first point to address. The link to governance and strategy in chapter 3 is important; asking about research culture is also important here.
- REAC members are happy to see that the EQA handbook addresses everything REAC has been discussing, and includes a focus on early career researchers.
- Collaboration only appears in Theme 2. It might be important to mention this elsewhere, maybe even in the other themes. Collaboration is a driver for enhancement.
- Commenting on the point about open science: smaller institutions cannot support their faculty members to pay fees for open access.
- Generally, REAC members express that they are content with the document.

QB will be defining concepts, including societal engagement, in a separate document. There will also be a guidance document which is linked with the themes. For each of the themes there will be a set of prompts, suggestions about which areas the institutions would like to reflect on in their SER.

The template for societal impact of research should be added to the SER template. As an example of how to capture this, the case-study approach. It is important to note the continuing importance of blue-skies research: not everyone needs to do research with societal impact. It will be very helpful for colleagues to test the opinions of their colleagues about this.

The main aim is to collect information on what we are doing with regard to societal impact of research: doing so helps change how people see their work; how Universities funded by public money present themselves; and it lets the public see what Universities are doing. It is also important for those doing applied research, because traditional promotion schemes and evaluation system usually prioritize blue-skies research. This is therefore something that could change the academic environment, effecting recruitment policies, promotion procedures etc.

(5) Any other business

Next meeting it would be helpful to get direct feedback from those who have tested the template.

(6) Dates for Future Meetings (provisional – AM unless specified)

Meeting invites for 2023 and 2024 meetings have been sent out to REAC members:

15 November 2023

6 March 2024

8 May 2024

11 September 2024
13 November 2024