

REAC meeting minutes of 6 March 2019, 9.00-12.00

In attendance: Philip Winn, Chair (PW), Guðbjörg Linda Rafnsdóttir (GR), Hulda Stefánsdóttir (HS), Tove Bull (TB), Skúli Skúlason (SS), Sæmundur Rögnvaldsson (SR) by video conference call, and Sigurður Óli Sigurðsson (SÓS) who took minutes. Andrée Sursock (AS) attended as an observer until 10:45.

Apologies received: Ragnhildur Helgadóttir (RH), and Kristján Kristjánsson (KK).

1. Minutes of the last meeting were accepted without amendments.

2. PW presented an update on the planned purchase of an Icelandic CRIS system. One bid came in, and it may be purchased if the price is right for the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (MESC). PW was optimistic that it will be bought and will be rolled out quickly. PW then listed the work that will be needed in the wake of CRIS purchase:

1. Implementation planning. A training package for implementation is no doubt included in the offer, but that is not enough for a well-executed roll-out and implementation. There are also further resource implications for continued development and use. REAC needs to find out from MESC about resources allocated to this project, both for the National Library and the universities. As CRIS needs to interface with different databases/systems (HR, finance, etc.) at the universities, RANNÍS, and other bodies, there needs to be manpower and time devoted to ensure that these systems are connected well to CRIS so it can be used to its full potential. PW noted that CRIS would likely as a first step be implanted into the National Library and institutions would subsequently be brought on line.

2. Agreeing on data definitions. A system of data definitions is needed for entries to the system. Question that need answering include: what constitutes impact/impactful activity, and what is a piece of research/scholarship output? There is need for standardisation of these definitions, so that there is consistency across the sector.

3. Validation planning. Once there is agreement on definition, there needs to be a process of validation for some research outputs but not for others – for example in gold open access or green open access (final submitted and accepted manuscript in institutional repository). PW noted that how institutions validate their outputs is a very strategic issue.

PW was of the opinion that REAC could contribute to all three phases of CRIS roll-out in some way if MESC sees value in that, especially as a different skill set may be needed to deal with these issues than was needed for the advisory group for purchasing CRIS. REAC could also be a driver for promoting dialogue and education on issues around CRIS.

Another way of conceptualising REAC's involvement, according to PW, is in the form of a monitoring group, advisory group, or implementation group. A monitoring function would simply entail keeping the Quality Board up-to-date on CRIS developments. An advisory function would

mean being advisory to the Quality Board and being engaged with an implementation group to give expert opinion, quality advice, etc. Finally, an implementation group would oversee 1), 2), and 3) above. However, being an implementation group is likely outside of the scope of REAC's current remit. HS voiced support for the idea of REAC being in a position to influence data definitions, which is especially important for the Arts, and SS felt that the role of REAC should be to shape the national conversation around terms like "research", "scholarship", "impact", etc. TB added that the Quality Council should contribute in some way to developing data definitions, as there is a need to get a system that is good for the Icelandic Higher Education sector and the individual institutions. PW further added that there may be a need for some sort of a Quality Council for research.

PW stated that REAC would need legitimacy for this work in the Icelandic context and asked if there is a group in Iceland that has a stake in this, for example a research council. GLR replied that CRIS has not been on the agenda of the Science Committee of the Science and Technology Policy Council, and she is a member of that Committee. GLR added that REAC is probably the body in Iceland that has the clearest remit around increasing quality of research management processes – open access, verification, etc. GLR felt that REAC should therefore be a quality advisory body around CRIS implementation, roll-out and operation rather than implementation group.

PW put forth the idea that CRIS implementation would need three working groups:

1. Technical implementation group. This group would primarily focus on IT, make sure CRIS works and that different IT systems interface with CRIS.
2. User implementation group. This group could possibly involve representatives from institutions, disciplines, and even the Quality Council. Members of this group would need an understanding of how CRIS is going to be used and how users would interact with the system. SS agrees that the Quality Council, for example, would be a good forum for such discussions.
3. Quality management group. This group would offer advice on data definitions; quality verification and management; research evaluation; and promoting dialogue to ensure that Iceland has a good system that has international comparability. This could be REAC in its current operating mode.

SR pointed out the need for being flexible and not making the process too resource-heavy. PW and AS agreed, but also that the main message needs to be that the bodies represented by REAC need a seat at the table in the CRIS roll-out. For that to happen, there needs to be clarity for roles and responsibilities.

All attendees agree that REAC should prepare a sheet on what REAC is and what it can do to support CRIS. The sheet would be brought to MESC and other stakeholders. The note would emphasise that research evaluation is the core business of REAC, that REAC would participate in CRIS work as part of a Quality Management process, and that data definitions are imperative for this process because they support the understanding and evaluation of quality.

GLR asked if there are lessons to be learned from other countries in terms of CRIS implementation. AS responded that it could be useful to organise conversations with Secretary Generals of Rector's Conferences in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland for example, to ask about implementation. They could alternatively speak at a Quality Council conference to talk about the process of roll-out and implementation of CRIS, how it was introduced, what people learned, and success factors.

3. Discussion about articles shared in advance by Icelandic REAC members. Following discussions, all present agree that the research quality management systems at IUA, RU and the Public Universities need to be brought to the table at a future REAC meeting. PW stated that in developing measurement systems, it is important that they do not hurt people once salaries, incentives, etc. are connected to the system. HS noted that any quality management system of research should not be the shaper of research, and REAC's work needs to take that into account.

4. Discussion about material shared in advance by PW, which contains sample impact definitions from the Research Excellence Framework. The sample list is not meant to be prescriptive, but serves to divide areas of impact by type, not discipline. All of the types of impact on the list have possibility to emerge through all disciplines. Once these have been captured, dialogue can ensue about reach and significance. It is PW's belief that Icelandic institutions will find things that they are doing, and not capturing, through an approach similar to this.

GLR notes that UI is preparing a system for capturing societal activities of academics, not impact. The university believes that this is needed before beginning conversation about impact. UI wants a template for staff to say what they are doing without burdensome validation.

5. Discussion on Guidance Note on SLR reporting on management of research. PW notes that this draft is different from the draft circulated in the November REAC meeting. The biggest change is that examples of items to report have been made more generic. The Quality Council, Quality Board and Ministry of Education, Science and Culture have all seen this draft, and are happy with it. Other REAC members noted their approval of the current draft and agree to forward it to Quality Board for approval.

6. Discussion on the Board's response to proposed legislation on good practice in research. GLR noted that the Science Committee of University of Iceland submitted a response that was similar to the Board's response.

7. PW informed REAC that the Quality Board had been contact by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture about possibly conducting an impact assessment of the Icelandic Research Fund. The details of the discussions are confidential, but PW noted that if the Board is commissioned to conduct this review, it could aid in the development of data definitions for CRIS.

Meeting concluded at 12:00.

