

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AUDIT

EXTERNAL RESEARCH-BASED ENGAGEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER **GUIDELINES**

Purpose

The purpose of the Macquarie University External Engagement and Knowledge Transfer Audit is to collect information relating to the social, environmental, cultural, economic and/or commercial impact that the University's research has had, both within Australia and internationally. To this end the Audit aims to establish the level of engagement that Macquarie researchers have had with external organisations or communities that might have an interest in, or gain benefit from, the results of our research; and to explore the influence that these research results have had on the businesses, or other interests, of those organisations/communities. It is important to distinguish this from impact within the academic community, which is seen rather as a component of research quality/excellence which might be measured by citations or similar indications of research quality.

Why Are We Undertaking the Audit?

The University does not have a comprehensive understanding or consolidated listing of its end-user engagement/knowledge transfer activities. It is crucial that the University obtains such information so that it adheres to several Performance Indicators of Goal 4 of its Research Strategic Plan: to be a significant contributor to the nation's economic, social and cultural well-being. This information is vital for several reasons:

- Hard data on our performance in this area will be critical to any case we might make for additional funding under the new Commonwealth Government's "Compacts" program;
- Such data and analyses thereof will be an important component of the 2009 AUQA Audit;
- The external engagement/knowledge transfer audit will be beneficial in Macquarie's preparation for the Federal Government's recently announced Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative, which will replace the former government's Research Quality Framework (RQF);
- A register of engagement/knowledge transfer activities will be beneficial in promoting (in conjunction with External Relations) the University's research, both in the media and in the community (at the local, State and National levels); and
- The exercise has intrinsic merit in raising the consciousness of staff members involved in research to the concepts of impact and engagement and the associated value placed upon them by the University (and, we believe, the Government).

What is the Definition of Research-Based Engagement and Knowledge Transfer?

A suitable definition of "**research-based engagement**" is:

Activities between the University and research end-users which are of mutual benefit (or at least potential benefit) and involve the transfer, sharing or interchange of knowledge derived from research.

An accepted definition of "**research-based knowledge transfer**" is:

The process of engaging, for mutual benefit, with business, government or the community to generate, acquire, apply and make accessible the knowledge, derived from research, that is needed to enhance material, human, social and environmental wellbeing, and the success of commercial enterprises.

So research-based engagement and knowledge transfer can be seen as processes by which the results of a particular piece of research are communicated to an end-user organisation/community and which have the potential to benefit the end-user. This goes beyond simply the creation of new knowledge. The benefit can be under one or several of the headings social, environmental, cultural, economic and commercial.

What Does “End-user” Mean?

An “end-user” of research can be defined as a company, external agency, organisation or community which benefits directly or indirectly from the outputs of that research. Frequently, when researchers undertake a piece of research they have a particular end-user in mind, but this is not always the case. Serendipitous research results can lead to unexpected benefits and therefore unanticipated beneficiaries – who then become the research end-users. In some cases it might be perceived that the general public are the end-users who ultimately benefit from a particular piece of research, but in almost all these cases there is a particular organisation that delivers products or services to the public; it would be more appropriate to name this organisation as the end-user.

For the purposes of the Audit, a suitable definition of an end-user of a particular piece of research is “the external non-academic entity which benefits from the uptake of the outputs of that research”.

Who Will Participate in the Audit?

All fixed-term or continuing academic staff (0.2 FTE or greater, and Level A-E) of the University who are undertaking research (not necessarily only those that meet the University’s formal definition of “research-active”) will be asked to participate in the Audit. Only by involving all staff who may be involved in research can the University obtain a complete picture of the range and extent of its engagement with end-users of research.

What Should I Do If I Have Engagement(s) Involving Other Macquarie Staff?

The University recognises that engagement can either be by individuals or by groups of researchers. The Audit aims to gather both types of interaction. Where an engagement is a group effort, one member should be chosen to present the information via the online form, with other group members being listed as collaborators. This is to avoid duplication of submissions and minimise the workload on staff. The University is keen to reduce the administrative workload on individual staff as much as possible.

What Period Does the Audit Cover?

The Audit will measure any engagement/knowledge transfer taking place in the period 2003-2007. Note that this is different from the former proposed RQF Impact assessment process, which required the research itself to be within the census period. Here it is the actual engagement/knowledge transfer that defines the date that must be within the census period.

How Do I Report Each Engagement/Knowledge Transfer?

Each “engagement/knowledge transfer” by an individual or group must be reported on a separate form, i.e. if an individual has three reportable “engagements/knowledge transfers” in the period 2003-2007, then he/she should complete three online forms.

What If I Was Appointed in, or after, the Census Period (2003-2007)?

The University is interested in any engagements that a current staff member was involved in prior to her/his appointment at Macquarie University, provided that the engagement/knowledge transfer took place within the census period.

What Sorts of “Engagements/Knowledge Transfers” Should be Reported?

You should tell us about any activity you have participated in, regarding your research, which has involved communicating your research findings in a targeted way to one or more people in the non-academic community who may benefit socially, economically, environmentally, and/or culturally from your findings (end-users). This act of engaging with end-users and/or transferring knowledge may or may not have led to a change being made at this stage. If a change has been made, this may currently have led to no, some, or extensive identifiable benefits for the end-user.

What If I Have No Engagements To Report?

You must still complete the first five questions of the online form. The first four questions refer to your personal details (staff number, name, department, and preferred email address). In question five (Q5), you should select “No” to indicate that you do not have anything to report on. Then you should submit the form as per the instructions, leaving the rest of the form (Q6 onwards) blank.

How Will the Results of This Audit Be Used?

The University will use the results of the Audit to establish a profile of its engagement, as indicated earlier in these Guidelines. Individual records will *not* be entered into the IRIS database, and will *not* be used as a metric in individual performance assessment. Of course, one of the purposes of the Audit is to identify individuals/groups that can then feature in the University's promotional material, so we will need to identify individuals to assist in this purpose. A report containing consolidated information gathered in the Audit will be made available to all participants within the University.

How Will We Use the Contacts and End-User Organisation Information That You Give Us?

We want the contacts so that we can follow up on particularly interesting cases of engagement/knowledge transfer. This follow up might include gaining perceptions from the end-user point of view about how effective and beneficial the process of engagement/knowledge transfer has been. We will only contact the nominated person with your knowledge.

Why Are We Asking You To Assess the Response and Extent of Benefits to the End-User?

The University needs to know how far any developments, based on the research results transferred to the end-user, have progressed so that it can gauge the impact that Macquarie's research has had on the economic, environmental, social or cultural wellbeing of the nation/globe.