



Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
the council of Australia's university presidents

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Latest AVCC RQF proposal will stimulate constructive discussion

The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) has today released its updated proposal for the Research Quality Framework (RQF), but indicated that it was still work-in-progress in some respects.

This latest proposal provides much greater detail on the AVCC's May 2005 proposal *Enhancing Australia's core research capacity*, which set down the main elements of a model for debate at the National Stakeholders Forum on 2 June 2005. In this document, now submitted to the Government's Expert Advisory Group for consideration at its meeting on 19 August 2005, the AVCC fleshes out the key aspects of its position concerning:

- the process for assessing the quality and impact of university research;
- how those assessments should be reported and published;
- how those assessments should be used to allocate research block funding to universities; and
- the implementation of the RQF, including meeting the costs of the RQF, introducing it in a sensible staged way, and its administrative support structure.

AVCC President Professor Di Yerbury said that this latest proposal focuses on the process required to demonstrate the extraordinary value of Australia's research effort, and puts forward an effective mechanism to ensure that available funding is best allocated to support the creation of the best research into the future.

"The AVCC also expects that the outcomes of the first RQF assessment will provide the basis for the Government to agree to fund a substantially enhanced research block funding program," Professor Yerbury said.

"The AVCC looks forward to the coming EAG meeting on 19 August 2005 where the AVCC proposal and other positions will be discussed and refined as the basis for the EAG's report to the Minister on the preferred model. We'll continue over coming months to develop our own proposal, building on the EAG recommendations, and we'll assess the likely outcomes of other models under consideration.

"We've made a lot of progress; but we need some more discussion amongst ourselves to finalise a couple of points – in particular the unit of assessment," she said. "Some Vice-Chancellors do not agree with our previously publicised majority view that the use of research groupings, selected by the universities themselves, provides a satisfactory basis for the unit of assessment. So that's an issue that the AVCC needs to work on a bit more this month at board and plenary levels.

"However, I'm generally pleased with the progress to date. The RQF has major implications for the funding, reputation and international standing of Australia's research and our universities, and it's worth investing a bit more time and effort to arrive at a model that all parts of the sector see as fair and appropriate," Professor Yerbury said.

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