**SUBMISSION TO THE ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT CONSULTATION PAPER BY THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF DEANS AND DIRECTORS OF CREATIVE ARTS**

The Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts (DDCA) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the development of mechanisms to capture and assess research engagement and impact.

DDCA was established to advance the disciplines of the creative arts in the higher education sector and to advocate for their role in society more broadly. Representing learning, teaching and research in the creative arts in Australia, and with a membership of over 22 universities and other higher education institutions, it builds upon the work carried out by the academic peak bodies, representing the creative arts in higher education in Australia.

DDCA supports the guiding principles to be adopted for the development of this assessment process, in particular that the measures of research engagement and impact be sensitive to a range of research types, including practitioner focused research. The Consultation Paper cites the UK REF frequently and it is hoped that its commitment to disciplinary reflexivity will reflect the 2014 REF principle of assessment that ‘all forms of research output will be assessed on a fair and equal basis’ without regarding ‘any particular form of output as of greater or lesser quality than another’ (HEFCE 2014).[[1]](#footnote-1)

DDCA acknowledges the need to minimise the collection burden upon institutions, ARC and researchers but wish to note that many of the existing data collections do not adequately capture or reflect the contribution of creative arts research. The development of a robust and disciplinary sensitive data collection and assessment system for engagement and impact provides an opportunity for improved national and institutional understanding of creative arts research and its contribution to Australian industry, culture and society.

**Definitions and scope**

Theterms that are used to define what is captured by this assessment are critically important to the equitable inclusion of research and researchers in creative arts disciplines. This includes not only the formal definitions applied to ‘impact’ and ‘engagement’ but also the interpretation and assumptions behind the terms used in these definitions. DDCA is against any definition which seeks to inequitably weight or exclude engagement and impact with not for profit, public sector, practitioners or society in general or exclusively uses financial measures to demonstrate engagement or impact.

***Question 1. What definition of ‘engagement’ should be used for the purpose of assessment?***

DDCA supports the definition of engagement proposed by ATSE*: ‘the interaction between researchers and research organisations and their larger communities/ industries for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge, understanding and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity’*; for its inclusion of communities broadly and its reflection of the exchange of understanding that flows between creative arts researchers, external arts practitioners, cultural and non-cultural industries, arts audiences and society in general.

However, the adoption of such a definition needs to avoid a narrow interpretation of the term ‘industry’ that excludes arts organisation, cultural institutions, practicing artists, not for profit and public sector agencies which may inadvertently exclude much creative arts research. The interpretation of ‘mutually beneficial exchange’ should ensure that this refers to non financial as well as financial resources.

***Question 2. What definition of ‘impact’ should be used for the purpose of assessment?***

The ARC definition of impact as: ‘*the demonstrable contribution that research makes to the economy, society, culture, national security, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life, beyond contributions to academia’*; will adequately capture the contribution made by creative arts research providing that the requirements needed to demonstrate this contribution are appropriately determined. The OECD definition of knowledge transfer and commercialisation, although recognising the importance of social value, applies a focus only on knowledge that can be exploited ‘by firms’ which is inappropriate to encompass the diversity of mechanisms and partnerships through which the creative arts contributes to economic and social value.

**Scope of Assessment**

DDCA acknowledges the difficulties in implementing a comprehensive assessment of research impact and is supportive of an appropriate case study approach and the use of metrics providing that the metrics selected recognise the ability of creative arts research to compete on ‘a level playing field’. DDCA rejects, for example, the use of ACGR listed research income as a primary assessment measure on the basis that the majority of schemes listed in the ACGR (currently and previously) exclude creative arts research, either explicitly in their eligibility conditions or implicitly in the assessment criteria that they apply**.**

Given the desire of the assessment system to be sensitive to research types and comparable across disciplines, DDCA expects appropriate attention to be paid to the ability of different disciplines to compete equally against the measures selected.

***Question 3. How should the scope of the assessment be defined?***

DDCA broadly supports the scope identified for assessment of impact and engagement presented in the discussion paper. We note, however, that there may be certain adjustments to the current definitions applied in ERA to creative arts research if the full extent of impact and engagement are to be captured. For example, ERA currently defines original creative works as eligible research outputs only where *‘the relevant eligible researcher is the creator of the creative work rather than, for example, the curator of an exhibition of creative works produced by others’* (5.4.9.3 ERA 2015 guidelines, p 47). This would exclude significant impact and public engagement outcomes that result from exhibitions which are curated by university based exhibition staff.

***Question 4. Would a selective approach using case studies or exemplars to assess impact provide benefits and incentives to universities?***

The adoption of selective case studies in the UK REF has enabled creative arts disciplines to demonstrate an exceptionally strong performance in research impact. In art and design (UOA 34) research has been *‘very effectively converted into social and economic impact that has had transformational effect across the UK and internationally.*’ (p88) and in music, drama, dance and performing arts ( UOA 35): ‘*Outstanding impact was identified across a range of social and cultural contexts, benefitting stakeholders, audiences and users outside academia’* (p104). The creative arts are intrinsically impact focused and extensively engaged with communities outside academia. The adoption of a case study approach in Australia would be expected to deliver similar results from creative arts disciplines, providing that the overall framework adopted a similarly inclusive approach to creative arts research outputs that has been applied in the UK REF.

DDCA notes that impact assessment in the UK REF is inclusive of a wide range of end-users, practitioners and industries, and would expect an Australian system to be similarly inclusive to avoid unintentionally incentivising university support for a particular type of research output or end-user over others.

***Question 5. If case studies or exemplars are used, should they focus on the outcomes of research or the steps taken by the institution to facilitate the outcomes?***

DDCA supports the use of case studies that focus upon both the outcomes of creative arts research and the steps taken by the institution to facilitate outcomes. While case studies that focus on the outcomes of research may be selective, DDCA supports the inclusion of institutional statements on steps taken to facilitate outcomes to encompass all research in creative arts that is conducted in the institution to avoid inadvertent institutional prioritisation of support for one genre, form or end-user over another.

***Question 6. What data is available to universities that could contribute to the engagement and impact assessment?***

Creative arts researchers engage extensively with their communities and end-users, whether cultural, not-for profit, government and other industry sectors, practitioners or the public more generally. Indeed, artists practicing within the university setting, both staff and students, are an active part of their professional arts sectors. However, few universities collect data on the range and extent of engagement between creative arts and communities outside the university.

In relation to artistic practice captured within current definitions of research, data on non traditional research outputs captured for ERA does not adequately encompass the extent of research which can contribute to the engagement and impact agenda. For example, in performing arts the narrow focus on innovation and originality in artistic research fails to capture the engagement from a high quality interpretation of an established repertoire that may impact significantly on practice focused technique in the genre, or the societal impact of such a delivery to a rural or remote community. ERA counts the first performance of an artistic work, but subsequent performances of the same work would need to be included in impact and engagement assessment Similarly, institutional practices to determine whether to include creative arts outputs in portfolios do not currently take into consideration the impact and engagement of such works individually. The system would need to ensure clarity of the relationship between the criteria used for ERA assessment and those for impact and engagement assessment.

***i.) Should the destination of Higher Degree Research students be included in the scope of the assessment?***

Graduate destinations of HDR students in creative arts may represent a useful measure of impact and engagement, but only if the current data collection was reformed to appropriately collect accurate information from these cohorts. Contrary to the stereotype of a new ‘job seeker’ that informs the current graduate destination survey, many creative arts students and graduates are established and successful artists who undertake postgraduate study to better understand, improve and communicate their practice. Other graduates embark upon, or continue in, self employed portfolio careers which the survey fails to capture adequately.

Enrolled HDRs and recent graduates from creative arts programs represent some of Australia’s leading practitioners in their genres and produce exemplary creative arts research outputs. Capturing these high profile outputs would boost the impact and engagement agenda aims far more comprehensively than merely reporting destination statistics.

***ii.) Should other types of students be included or excluded from the scope of assessment (e.g. professional Masters level programs, undergraduate students)?***

Unlike many other academic disciplines, undergraduate students in some creative arts programs include those with extensive prior training, knowledge and practice in their field. Undergraduate and postgraduate programs in creative arts can result in original and high quality creative works that engage audiences and have impact upon practice within their genres, which would positively influence institutional impact and engagement reporting. However, to include such work would need to recognise that, unlike many other disciplines, creative arts undergraduate students produce creative research outputs as part of their studies. Universities would need to be mindful of the IP ownership and rights of student creators in such works, whether enrolled at undergraduate or postgraduate level.

***Key Issues***

***Question 7. What are the key challenges for assessing engagement and impact and how can these be addressed?***

Creative arts practice engages and impacts with different beneficiaries and end-users on different levels. The current definitions applied to define creative arts practice outputs as research within ERA, limit the extent to which creative arts outputs which advance art, artistic technique and engage artistic practitioners or which have impact upon our broader society can be recognised. For example, simplistic measures such as counting audience numbers neglects the reality that high quality performances of popular classics will attract higher audiences and deliver greater impact than an innovative new compositions or choreographed pieces that meet ERA research definitions. Similarly, the definitions applied to those who can submit outputs to ERA limits the extent of creative arts research that can be captured under the research impact and engagement agenda.

While it may be comparatively easy to capture the impact of, and engagement of creative arts research that targets a particular group (e.g. art/music therapy), it may be difficult to capture and assess impact of research upon society more generally. DDCA would be concerned to avoid any data capture approaches that would drive university preferences to support more ‘applied’ forms of artistic research where data may be easier to obtain.

***Question 8. Is it worthwhile to seek to attribute specific impacts to specific research and, if so, how should impact be attributed (especially in regard to a possible methodology that uses case studies or exemplars)?***

***Question 9. To what level of granularity and classification (e.g. ANZSRC Fields of Research) should measures be aggregated?***

The Field of Research codes at six digit level provides a more useful level from which to consider creative arts research contribution. While in Visual Arts, four digit codes are less problematic, the aggregation of performing arts and creative writing at four digit needs to be revised to reflect the distinct differences between these disciplinary groups. The two and four digit FOR codes may not be appropriate to capture multi-disciplinary or multi-beneficiary impact and engagement, although the use of case studies may be designed to address interdisciplinary contributions.

***Question 10. What timeframes should be considered for the engagement activities under assessment?***

***Question 11. What timeframes should be considered for the impact activities under assessment?***

DDCA agrees with the suggested timeframe of 3 - 9 years as appropriate to capture both impact and engagement, even though impact and engagement outcomes for creative arts research may be more immediately apparent.

***Question 12. How can the assessment balance the need to minimise reporting burden with robust requirements for data collection and verification?***

DDCA acknowledges the need to minimize the impact of reporting on both institutional systems and academic staff internally, but wishes to note that creative arts research is not well represented in the institutional data collection systems that have been developed to date***.*** Creative arts research outputs are not captured by HERDC; ERA collects only limited data on artistic engagement and impact for a narrow number of academic staff selected as research contributors, which excludes a significant proportion of works and staff who contribute to engagement and impact. ERA also only collects examples of new work, whereas large community and other societal impact may be gleaned from research which universities currently perceive as professional practice. In general, universities collect very little data on arts activities, professional engagement and contribution to the broader art world. While the current data collection systems may adequately capture data that reflects the contributions of other disciplines, if the contribution of the arts is to be adequately and equitably included, it would necessitate the collection of new data.

***Question 13. What approaches or measures can be used to manage the disciplinary differences in research engagement and impact?***

***Question 14. What measures or approaches to evaluation used for the assessment can appropriately account for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary engagement and impacts?***

DDCA supports the adoption of appropriate case study methodologies that are sufficiently developed to include disciplinary differences and interdisciplinary approaches for the assessment of both engagement and impact.

***Types of engagement and impact indicators***

***Question 15. What types of engagement indicators should be used?***

For some creative arts disciplines, some of the indicators suggested in the table provided in the Consultation Paper may be usefulwhere they can be made more applicable to the ‘business of art’ and artistic professional practice, or in the case of university expenditure/ staffing support, dedicated to arts engagement / impact needs. Media coverage may be useful for arts as, although critical reviews may be falling in some disciplines and genres, some reviews of exhibitions and new works are still provided. Modification of traditional ‘commercialisation’ metrics such as ‘spin-offs’ to capture arts entrepreneurship such as setting up galleries, ensembles, groups and other professional practice entities (that may or may not have ABNs).

***Question 16. What types of impact indicators should be used?***

Given the diversity of beneficiaries and impact that creative arts research provides, a number of indicators may be useful depending upon the type of research in question.

* Case studies would appear the best overall indicator for creative arts research
* Adoption of the REF definition in relation to research that benefits and changes understanding (currently not captured by research definitions)
* The benefits to arts from university process statements may be influenced by the extent to which arts are considered research strength. This could be positive for those institutions with high ERA ranks but may be detrimental to those with emerging or smaller artistic cohorts
* ABN numbers could be another useful metric for the arts where students select self employment as professional artists rather than the current graduate destination gaps
* Internet metrics may also be beneficial for those whose work can be represented and profiled digitally
* The value of survey data would depend upon whether ‘industry’ was defined to capture cultural and artistic industries.

***Other***

***Question 17. Are there any additional comments you wish to make?***

Analysis of the impact of the 2014 UK[[2]](#footnote-2) highlights the extent to which creative arts disciplines contribute to industry and product innovation whether this is through innovations in product and graphic design, acoustics, musical instruments and installation, new software and signal processing. This is in addition to the direct contribution to the entertainment and cultural industries. Further, the REF report noted the ‘considerable amount of activity [that] related to the creation and support of SMEs’ (ref p88). In Australia, the contribution of creative arts research toadvances in industry settings is largely overlooked in the National Innovation and Science Agenda. Unlike in the US[[3]](#footnote-3) and increasingly in the UK[[4]](#footnote-4), Australia has not embraced the ‘STEM to STEAM’ agenda in its innovation framework.

Further, the blanket exclusion of ‘research into the arts’[[5]](#footnote-5) applied by the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science in its R & D tax concession scheme can act as a disincentive to Australian companies from accessing the type of research that is being used by international counterparts and prevents any accurate data capture from this data source about the contribution of the creative arts.

DDCA would welcome any opportunities that the development of the impact and engagement system may offer to address these oversights.

1. HEFCE (2014) Assessment framework and guidance on submissions (updated to include addendum published in January 2012) REF 2014 accessed at <http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/pub/assessmentframeworkandguidanceonsubmissions/GOS%20including%20addendum.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Research Excellence Framework (2015) Research Excellence Framework 2014: Overview report by Main Panel D and Sub-panels 27 to 36. Accessed at: <http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/expanel/member/Main%20Panel%20D%20overview%20report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. US congress (2013) H. RES. 51 http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113hres51ih/pdf/BILLS-113hres51ih.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Arts Council (2016) £1 million Creative Local Growth funding for the Midlands. Accessed at: http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/%C2%A31-million-creative-local-growth-funding-midlands [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Department of Industry, Innovation and Science (2016) The R & D Tax Incentive Snapshot. Step #: Is my Work Eligible. Accessed at: http://www.randdsnapshot.business.gov.au/Pages/Is-My-Work-Eligible.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-5)