

TLRPs Assessment of Research

Introduction

TLRP is the largest coordinated programme of education research yet funded in the UK. As such, it has many responsibilities – including maintaining the transparency of its funding processes and contributing to thinking about research assessment.

In the context of the Research Assessment Exercise, there has also been discussion of the ‘overarching issues’ which were highlighted by the Roberts and Lambert reviews and which were reflected in HEFCE’s Circular of July 2004 (RAE 03/2004). The influence of these concerns can also be seen in the July 2005 proposals of the Education sub-panel for the 2008 RAE - particularly, for example, in the interpretation of:

- Originality
- Significance
- Rigour

There has been considerable consideration of such matters within TLRP over the past few years, and it has therefore been suggested that it might be helpful to make TLRP’s assessment criteria available for consideration in the context of contemporary discussions on research quality.

Project Assessment

All TLRP applications are assessed by the Programme’s Steering Committee, which is responsible for judging quality and determining priorities for funding. Advice

from peer reviewers, including user representatives, inform the Committee’s decisions. In considering which shortlisted applications should be funded, particular attention is paid to explicit criteria.

Project Evaluation

All funded TLRP investments are evaluated using ESRC procedures for research projects within programmes. In particular, these use peer rapporteurs to comment on, and grade, each final project report and the illustrative publications which are submitted. There are adaptations to reflect TLRP’s specific goals.

Peer review

The legitimacy of these processes depends crucially on the quality of the judgements which peers make. We ‘gate-keep’ for each other. In a diverse field such as Education, balance and open-mindedness are particularly important. ESRC procedures ensure that there are checks and balances (for instance initial referees, assessors of referee comments and full discussion by the decision making body).

Both initial assessments and final evaluations draw on TLRP’s criteria of research quality.

These are set out in full overleaf.

For more information: contact TLRP’s Director Professor Andrew Pollard, a.pollard@ioe.ac.uk, or visit www.tlrp.org

TLRP criteria

1. **Contribution and Fit to the Programme.** Does the proposal display a close fit to overall aims and objectives of the Programme. Is there a thoughtful commitment to active participation in the Programme as a whole? Would the research add significant value to and extend current research within the TLRP? Would it complement and add-value to other relevant initiatives in the field? Is the research likely to make a significant impact on teaching and learning policy and/or practice in the UK and to lead to significant improvements in *outcomes* for learners in?
2. **User Engagement and Partnership.** Does the proposal include strong collaborative partnerships and appropriate user engagement with relevant policy-makers and practitioners (and, where appropriate with learners themselves) throughout all stages of the research? Is there evidence that relevant partners have been engaged, as appropriate, in the development of the proposal?
3. **Contribution to Knowledge.** Is the proposal grounded in a thorough review of the extant literature in relevant fields? Does the proposal have a coherent theoretical and analytical framework? Is it likely to make a significant contribution to the development of the current research knowledge base?
4. **Inter-disciplinary and multi-sector approaches.** Where appropriate, have opportunities for inter-disciplinary collaboration and cross-sectoral approaches been explored?
5. **Research Teams and Project Management.** Does the proposal indicate that the project team, in association if appropriate with existing TLRP projects, has or can develop the skills and expertise necessary to bring the research to a successful conclusion? Does the proposal have a clear, well-designed and robust project management structure capable of supporting the proposed partnerships and delivering on the specified work programme?
6. **Research Design and Methods.** Does the proposal clearly and fully describe a research design appropriate for the achievement of the stated research objectives? Is the project time-scale appropriate to the research design? Are there rigorous methods for assessing learning outcomes (broadly conceived)? Are there realistic proposals for data-collection and data-analysis? Has careful consideration been given to any ethical issues that may be raised?
7. **Contribution to Research Capacity Building.** Is there a commitment to helping to build research capacity in teaching and learning in the field?
8. **Communication and Impact Plan.** Is there a well-developed project communication and impact plan, which would make a significant contribution to the Programme's overall Communication and Impact Strategy? Is there a clear statement of the anticipated outputs appropriately targeted at a range of potential academic and non-academic audiences?
9. **Value for money.** Would the research represent value for money relative to the likely outcomes? Are the resources requested necessary and adequate for the effective conduct of the research as outlined, including the communication and impact proposal