

University Reform, Globalisation and Europeanisation (URGE)



Work Package 5 Detailed Plan

EU FP7 (PEOPLE) MARIE CURIE IRSES

URGE: University Reform, Globalisation and Europeanisation

Work package number	5	Start date or starting event:	March 2012
Work package title	Impacts: Character of academic research and conduct of researchers		
Beneficiary/Partner Organisation short name	AU/UoA UNIVBRIS/UoA		
Work package coordinator	Prof. Susan Wright		

Description of work

The reforms of universities in New Zealand, Denmark and the UK (analysed in work package 4) have to a large extent been informed by a desire to steer university research towards the ‘needs of a knowledge economy’. This work package critically examines the meanings and implications of that agenda for academic research and the activities and conduct of researchers.

It is often argued that pressure to fulfil government priorities, the new national systems of assessment and accountability, and the internal systems of strategic management, priority setting and competitive allocation of funding are changing the nature of research. The classic description of this process is the shift from ‘Mode One’ to ‘Mode Two’ type research (Gibbons et al.1994).

Revised and Improved Objectives

Within this context, the Work Package addresses the following questions:

1. How are national (and international) systems of research assessment and ranking influencing academic work in different countries?
 - What counts as proper ‘research’ within the new regimes of academic accountability?
 - How is research defined and measured in international systems of assessment (the NZ PBRF, UK REF, Danish points system)? What is measurable and what are the methods of evaluation?
 - How are governments seeking to steer university research through funding allocations and competition for resources? How do funding models work?
 - How are these funding and measuring instruments being adopted and adapted by university managers for their own purposes? And how do individuals perceive them?
2. What is the impact of these changes on the kinds of research activities currently being undertaken and on the conduct and identities of researchers?
 - How do researchers respond to and *reconcile* different concepts of academic research? Do they try and ignore these incentives, subvert them, realign their activities, or seek to ‘game’ the system?
 - What epistemological and ethical issues concern them?

- What is the emerging balance between ‘free’ inquiry, fundamental research to support knowledge industries, commissioned research, other forms of knowledge transfer and contributions to informed public debate?

Knowledge Exchange

To meet the objectives above we will draw on the following contributions:

1. How are national (and international) systems of research assessment and ranking influencing academic work in different countries?

RAE and International comparisons - Lisa Lucas
 PBRF - Bruce Curtis or John Codd or Leon Bakker
 Danish points system and “Follow the Money” Sue Wright

2. What is the impact of these changes on the kinds of research activities currently being undertaken and on the conduct and identities of researchers? What is the emerging balance between ‘free’ inquiry, fundamental research to support knowledge industries, commissioned research, other forms of knowledge transfer and contributions to informed public debate?

Academics’ self-perception and understanding of their work environment - Dirk Michel Schertges
 City regions – how ‘impact’ and ‘engagement’ are being conceptualised and materialised Susan Robertson
 Mapping commercialisation of research in NZ - Nick Lewis, Cris Shore, John Morgan and Nigel Haworth

Tasks

The work package will involve the following tasks:

Task 5.1: Share and extend knowledge on the diversity of research activities currently being undertaken by the partner institutions.

Task 5.2: Build on current research projects (‘An Ethnography of New Zealand Universities’, ‘New Management, New Identities? Danish University Reform in an International Perspective’ and UNIVBRIS’s studies of the role of universities in city-regions) to identify the different ways in which governments in Denmark, New Zealand, the UK and elsewhere are trying to steer and incentivize particular types of research.

Task 5.3: Compare the results of AU’s, UNIVBRIS’s and UoA’s ethnographic studies of the impacts of research assessment systems on academic work in the three countries.

Task 5.4: Design future collaborative research that will extend the participants’ existing studies and earlier scholarly research on academic identities and policy change (e.g. Mary Henkel 2000). Conduct pilot interviews of academics to map how they respond to and reconcile different concepts of academic research. This pilot study will also consider issues such as research freedom, intellectual property rights, the balance between fundamental research, commissioned

research, forms of knowledge transfer, research ethics, and academics' contributions to public debate.

Visits

The WP will involve visit (s) by:

1. **Kiani** (UoA) will visit AU for 1 month hosted by Wright and Nielsen. The purpose is to draw on comparative research that helps to theorise Iranian university reforms within the context of wider global processes. During her visit the detailed plan for the work package and the pilot study for future collaborative research will be developed by Wright, Rata and Lucas
2. **Lucas** (UNIVBRIS) will visit UoA for 3 months hosted by Rata. The purpose is to share knowledge on Lucas' study of the way the UK's revised Research Assessment Exercise is affecting academic research, to learn from colleagues at Auckland about research assessment in New Zealand, and to develop a pilot for future collaborative research.
3. **Wright** (AU) will visit UoA for 4 months hosted by Shore and Rata. The purpose is to compare the results of her study with Shore's and Lucas on the ways assessment systems are affecting the nature of academic work and to contrast the effects of reforms on research in different countries.
4. **Schertges**(AU) will visit UoA for one month to complete his interviewing and present results from his study at the conference.

Deliverables

D 5.1 Generation of information on the range and diversity of research activities currently being undertaken by the partner universities.

D 5.2 Scientific working paper comparing the impacts of research assessment systems on academic work in the three countries.

D 5.3 Include in the WP 5 workshop the results of pilot studies and proposals for future collaborative ethnographic work on the changing character of academic research and conduct of researchers

Researchers involved

Rata (UoA), Lucas (UNIVBRIS), Wright (AU)

Involved as hosts

Kristensen (AU), Wright (AU), Shore (UoA), Rata (UoA)