

COLLATED REPORTS - 12 March 2010

ASA Chair's report for meeting,

Issues which have arisen since last meeting concern

1. REF consultation

Appendix 1 provides the final submission of the ASA to the Research Evaluation Framework consultation. This was derived from (a) a draft that I developed based on the REF report and discussion with HODs and Hastings Donnan (apologies to him for spelling his name wrong frequently!), (b) discussion at a meeting of HODs on 27 Nov 2009, and (c) email discussion of the subsequent total redraft. The document is a 'lowest common denominator' in some respects, but still articulates the forceful views of the discipline.

Since the consultation, it has become clear that in the event of a change of government, it is likely that the question of impact and the timing of the REF will be revisited. It is feasible that this will be revisited even if there is no change of government, given the problems expressed by the academic community.

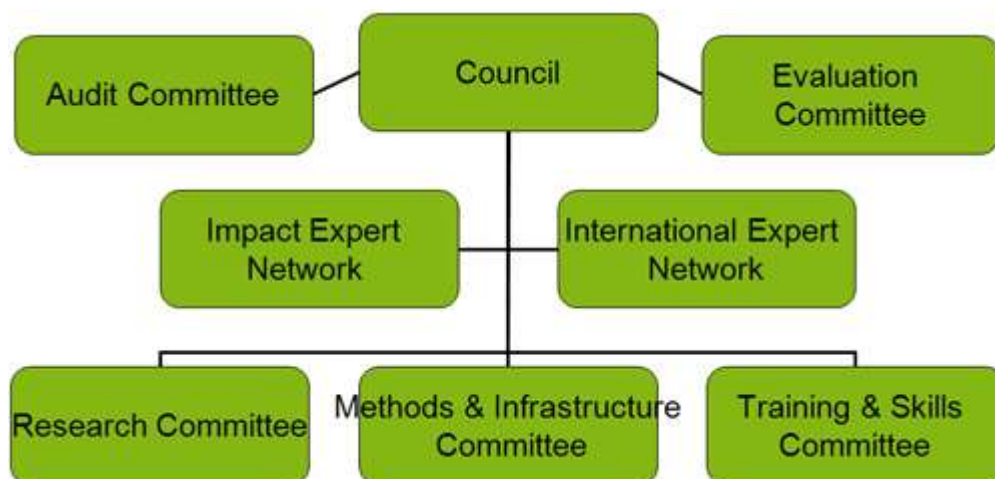
2. ESRC board membership.

ESRC advertised for membership of their newly restructured boards, but did not seek nominations from learned societies. They did contact us a week before the deadline to encourage us to encourage our members to apply, but unfortunately this reminder fell right at the beginning of the spring term (on 12th Jan for the 18th Jan deadline), at a time when I was not consulting my ASA mail each week, and thus I could circulate this reminder only after the deadline. I am unsure whether there were any anthropology applicants. I did inquire whether it was possible for anthropologists to apply after the deadline but was told that ESRC were "currently considering the applications received against a template for membership across the different committees and panels. This process may identify a number of gaps that need addressing and if anthropology is one of these we may be in touch with you to discuss this further."

There are major changes to ESRC Board and committee structures, with effect from 1st April 2010.

The ESRC's current four boards and four committees will from 1 April 2010 be restructured in order to ensure delivery on the new Strategic Plan. The new structure aims to "offer a more integrated approach to the research and training portfolios and embed impact and international activity in all areas of work. It will also enable ESRC to deal more effectively with responsive mode applications."

The new structure will include three policy committees (the Research Committee, the Methods and Infrastructure Committee, and the Training and Skills Committee), two virtual networks (impact and international), an Evaluation Committee and an Audit Committee.



The ESRC will also be making changes in 2010 to the structures which support the assessment of grant applications through its responsive mode schemes. In the new structure funding decisions will be taken by a **Grants Delivery Group**, supported by **standing panels of expert assessors**.

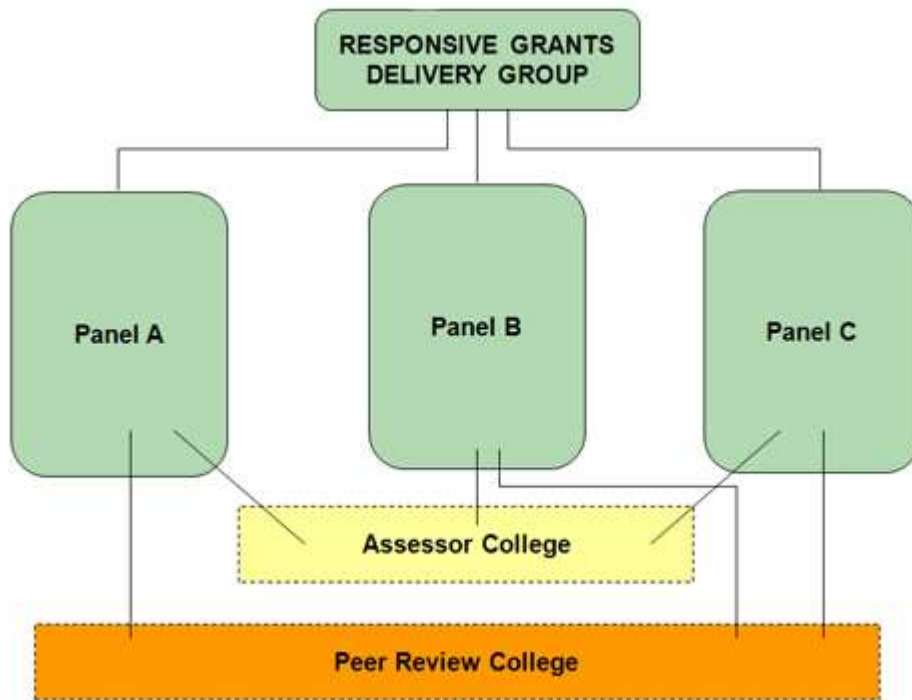
The new structure will amalgamate and streamline the multiple open schemes across research grants, training and skills, knowledge transfer and methods and infrastructure. Combining the administration of these schemes will allow assessors to make more informed decisions on funding across our schemes while reducing the workload for individuals and providing a more efficient and consistent decision-making process.

The Group will be supported by three standing panels of expert assessors which will meet three times a year. ESRC will also be drawing on a pool of assessors (different to the peer review college below) to provide a source of expertise to refresh and supplement panel membership where required.

The panels will also be used to assess applications through the ESRC fast-track schemes such as small grants, post-doctoral fellowships and some knowledge transfer schemes. More detailed information on the Grant Delivery Group and the panels will be provided in due course.

To support the new committee structure and grants assessment process ESRC are creating a college of peer reviewers to referee grant proposals, which will be in place by summer 2010. Members of the Peer Review College will be asked to sign up to review a set number of proposals per year. This system will provide a more effective means for reviewing research applications by improving the overall response rate of reviewers and thus reducing processing times for proposals.

The College will have 1,500 to 2,000 members covering all grants (small, standard, first grants, centres), training awards, fellowships, final reports, knowledge transfer and public engagement awards. In addition to using members of the new College the Council will continue to draw upon the wider academic and user communities to act as referees on research proposals.



Many questions arise from the restructuring, in particular:

- How is the discipline to be represented in the new structure in the assessor and peer review college?
- How are the ventures between ESRC and other interests/funders - about which anthropologists have been concerned (e.g. with FCO, Home Office)- to be governed in the new structure. What is the nature of their academic governance?

Concerning ESRC Peer Review College We were asked to nominate members for ESRC's peer review college (not the assessor college). We were able to make ten nominations. I wrote to HODs and given that the day before the deadline there were not ten names, we nominated all those who replied to say that they would be happy to be nominated. They were Sarah Green (Manchester), David Pratten, Elizabeth Ewart, Stanley Ulijaszek, Ian Walker (all from Oxford), Jane Cowan (Sussex), Nayanika Mookherjee (Lancaster).

ESRC grant holders have also been incorporated into the Peer Review College.

3.DTC/DTU Peer review

ASA, as a learned society, was asked to nominate people to become members of the 'Peer Review' group for the Doctoral Training Centres and Doctoral Training Unit applications for which the deadline has just passed. We nominated three people (Tim Ingold, Lola Martinez and Marcus Banks). As far as I know, only Marcus Banks has been selected to join this panel. Decisions will be announced in December.

Some members wrote to me in early February concerned that our representation on the DTC/DTU review process was not as strong as some other disciplines. I wrote to Julie McLaren at ESRC that “ Members of our association have contacted me expressing concern that anthropology is under represented on the proposed Peer Review Body for DTC and DTUs. To our knowledge, only a single anthropologist, Professor Marcus Banks who was nominated by our association, is involved in this peer review process, and we are concerned that this representation is very light relative to inputs from other disciplines. I wonder whether you could let me know whether this level of representation is the same for all disciplines? I received an immediate reply, promising a considered reply, but have since heard nothing.

4. Firth Lecture:

Professor Vincent Crapanzano has accepted to present the Firth Lecture at ASA 2010 at Queen's in Belfast.

5. Academy of Social Sciences:

This organisation has become increasingly productive over the past 6 months (in lobbying, in REF, in research ethics, in making the case for social science etc. etc.). At the last meeting, we agreed to suggest to our membership that we re-subscribe. I discussed our intention with the current chair of ACSS who was delighted. I indicated that we would not be in a position to our subscription until the vote at AGM.

6. Issues raised by members

Two issues have been raised by members. The first concerns the RCUK Global Uncertainties Programme, and the way in which this programme is bringing together researchers and users from the British Home and Foreign Office intelligence community. Sensitivities have been raised with RCUK which are similar to those raised two years ago with ESRC. Lessons learnt by ESRC may have been overlooked by the current RCUK organisation. I propose to write to the programme leader concerning this.

Secondly, concerns have been raised concerning the requirement of the research councils to deposit potentially confidential qualitative field notes with the national data archive. The extent to which fieldnotes are personal, or should be written as open access (albeit rendered confidential) with public funding opens questions concerning who research is for.

Thirdly concerns have been raised concerning the ethics of visual recording in fieldwork and its relation to research ethics. I have passed this question on to our ethics coordinator, Nayanika Mookherjee.

Lastly, the hacking into the university e-mail system at UEA should signal to anthropologists working in UK universities that data kept on university servers may not be as secure as

anticipated, and that reflection could be given concerning confidentiality and modes of recording of field data and analysis.

Appendix 1: ASA Response to REF

Meeting on Friday 27th Nov 2009

RESPONSE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGISTS OF THE UK AND COMMONWEALTH

Respondent's details

Are you responding: (Delete one)	On behalf of an organisation
Name of responding organisation/individual	Association of Social Anthropologists of UK and Commonwealth
Type of organisation (Delete those that are not applicable)	Academic association / learned society
Contact name	Professor James Fairhead
Position within organisation	Chair
Contact phone number	+ 44 1273 877194
Contact e-mail address	j.r.fairhead@sussex.ac.uk Chair@theasa.org

Consultation questions

(Boxes for responses can be expanded to the desired length.)

Consultation question 1: Do you agree with the proposed key features of the REF? If not, explain why.

We support the primacy accorded to expert review, informed where appropriate by metrics. Previous Research Assessment Exercises have been regarded as both fair and authoritative by members of our discipline because of the centrality of informed peer review of research outputs. We are concerned that two of the proposed changes – the weighting and methodology proposed for the assessment of impact, and the apparently arbitrary combination of small disciplines into new combined panels – will seriously undermine credibility of research evaluation.

We regret that this consultation has been conducted before the results of the piloting of impact assessment are known.

Anthropology's substantial contributions to the world of policy and practice usually involves a combination of features which are inadequately captured in the proposed methodology for assessment of impact, especially those concerning (a) 'demonstrable impact' and (b) international impact.

We are concerned by a lack of clarity about the new panel structure. Although the consultation document starts from the axiom that research will be assessed at the level of 'coherent research units', the proposed sub-panel structure brings together disciplines which in many HEIs do not work together as 'coherent research units', and which have different methodological protocols and different patterns of publication and impact. For this reason, we think it essential that departments of anthropology are able to submit discrete submissions, with procedural guarantees that they will be assessed by anthropological assessors, whatever the eventual sub-panel structure. Requiring HEIs to put together composite submissions for groups of disciplines that have been joined for essentially bureaucratic reasons would seriously compromise our confidence in the peer review process.

Consultation question 2: What comments do you have on the proposed approach to assessing outputs? If you disagree with any of these proposals please explain why.

Comments are especially welcomed on the following proposals:

- that institutions should select research staff and outputs to be assessed
- for the categories of staff eligible for selection, and how they are defined
- for encouraging institutions to submit – and for assessing – all types of high-quality research outputs including applied and translational research
- for the use of citation information to inform the review of outputs in appropriate UOAs (including the range of appropriate UOAs, the type of citation information that should be provided to panels as outlined in Annex C, and the flexibility panels should have in using the information)

and on the following options:

- whether there should be a maximum of three or four outputs submitted per researcher
- whether certain types of output should be 'double weighted' and if so, how these could be defined.

We support the submission of four outputs for full time eligible staff, as this can demonstrate the full range and spread of research.

We support the potential for double weighting of certain research outputs, and note (a) that the criteria must be clear and known well in advance, (b) that discipline-specific criteria for double-weighting will need to be developed, and (c) that the decision for an output to be double weighted should be made by the submitting institution.

We believe that there are strong arguments for the inclusion of some honorary and emeritus researchers as category C, who are not currently employed by anyone but who are actually

undertaking (or have undertaken) research in the unit concerned. This is because they may well have been employed earlier in the assessment period, or in earlier assessments and it would be inappropriate to be unable to record their research and the continued impact of their research which is one of the functions of emeritus and honorary status.

Given the conclusions of the bibliometrics pilot, we advise that the amount of citation analysis provided to panels is restricted, to avoid the danger of over-reliance.

Consultation question 3: What comments do you have on the proposed approach to assessing impact? If you disagree with any of these proposals please explain why.

Comments are especially welcomed on the following:

- how we propose to address the key challenges of time lags and attribution
- the type of evidence to be submitted, in the form of case studies and an impact statement supported by indicators (including comments on the initial template for case studies and menu of indicators at Annex D)
- the criteria for assessing impact and the definition of levels for the impact sub-profile
- the role of research users in assessing impact.

The International Benchmarking Report on British Anthropology commissioned by ESRC in 2007 reported that the discipline 'punched above its weight' on impact. We are concerned that the proposed methodology and criteria for assessment of impact will seriously under-record actual impact. The adoption of a procedure which under-records real areas of achievement outside academia is in no one's interests and we are extremely willing to assist in revisions and improvements in this area.

We regret that we are asked to comment on the proposed approach to assessing impact before the results of the 'pilot' are published, given the insurmountable methodological challenges with which the pilot is faced (para 69), and the difficulties of establishing comparable criteria for impact excellence across subjects and styles of working (individuals and groups). We await the results of the pilot, and hope that further consultation will be solicited.

We are extremely concerned that adhering to 'demonstrable contribution' (para 68) in the draft procedures will hugely under-record the impact of research by excluding the indirect impact which is achieved through the more 'demonstrable contribution' of others; of other researchers (many of whom are international, and not part of REF), of doctoral researchers, and of graduate and undergraduate students as they move on. We are very concerned that the under-recording of indirect impact will (a) undermine certain types of research that produce it (in particular theoretical and methodological), and (b) undermine existing and productive modes of unselfish collaboration and dissemination that achieve it. Perversely therefore, adhering to the principle of 'demonstrable contribution' risks reducing the impact of our discipline in the long term, and the health of our discipline which is currently sustained by it. It should be recalled that research of impact is achieved both by standing on the shoulders of others, and (in post-colonial, international contexts) in offering our shoulders to others. Either way, it will be extremely damaging if shoulders are to receive neither recognition, nor reward.

We are concerned that the indicators of impact illustrated in Annex D are written in the assumption that UK research addresses UK national agendas. We suggest that to conduct world leading research, and to attract and retain world leading academics and researchers, indicators of impact need to be framed in international and global frames.

We note that estimation of impact is an element in other areas of the assessment which means that it is 'doubly' (indeed multiply) counted. Potential impact is an element in the appreciation of the significance and thus the *quality* of research outputs - there is a box anticipated to fill in next to each output for precisely this reason. Impact is also part of researcher esteem and of research environment, and is also captured within metrics of research funding (which is now directed in relation to impact statements as well as research quality). Through multiple counting, questions of impact in the current proposal are thus receiving much more than 25% weighting.

We note that there are innumerable factors other than research which drive policy and economic and cultural impact, often in the face of, not because of, good research, whether for political reasons, cultural fashions and economic forces in which externalities are not priced; etc.. The focus on impact, and the choice of its indicators in Annex D will clearly favour universities and departments that produce research that is economically, culturally or politically 'on message' in the short term over those that produce political, economic and cultural critique which may have longer term relevance. It is our view that apportioning 25% of REF to impact (as currently interpreted), on top of its multiple counting, will dangerously bias research towards short term exigencies, and undermine the importance of research for the long term, which is so important for the UK's academic reputation.

We are particularly concerned, given the average size of anthropology departments is about 17 FTE, and given the current proposals, that the majority of departments would be expected to offer only two or three case studies as evidence of impact. This is inadequate evidence on which to demonstrate the full range of potential impacts across the breadth of the submission. Given the difficulties involved in discerning and attributing impact, this is not enough evidence to sustain in a robust way almost 25% of the assessment, and its legitimacy will surely be open to challenge.

Whilst we support the need to extend the period of assessment of research impact to periods prior to the REF, we are concerned that issues of staff turnover will lead to impact being under-recorded or misallocated given (a) the retirement of senior researchers whose earlier research has enduring, current impact, and (b) the mobility of researchers whose research when in a previous institution has an enduring and current impact. In particular, it is neither clear nor straightforwardly justifiable whether assessment of impact should follow the researcher (similar to assessment of outputs) or the institution.

We note that extending the eligible period for assessing impact unfairly biases assessment against researchers who have begun producing results since RAE 2008, and thus against departments that nurture early career researchers.

We note that extending the eligible period for assessing impact introduces a bias against the establishment of new departments.

We are concerned that as currently configured, introducing 'impact' will increase the breadth of work required of the assessment panels. We are concerned that this additional complexity of panel work and the multiplication of problems of calibration, when combined with the total inexperience of all concerned in evaluating impact, will seriously dilute the credibility of expert review. As currently configured, the remit and complexity of the panel has expanded, such that anthropology submissions will be adjudicated by (a) anthropologists and those of other disciplines in the same sub panel, (b) research user panel members, (c) anthropology special advisors who are not panel members, (d) anthropology or panel impact specialist advisors (e) members of panels to which outputs and or impacts are cross referred. They will be evaluating research from different research periods and using different scales (the marking criteria for impact being different than for quality and environment).

We underline the importance of appreciating impacts not only in the UK, but across the world, and are concerned that this places unrealistic demands on the panel to verify claims.

We are concerned that there is no basis for comparing and for discriminating convincingly between impacts of entirely different kinds, or those achieved through entirely different but equally legitimate modes of active engagement.

Consultation question 4: Do you have any comments on the proposed approach to assessing research environment?

Although the consultation document does not explicitly discuss the possibility of HEIs returning multiple submissions to the same sub-panel, we note that Funding Council representatives at consultation events have made it clear that they seek to prevent multiple submissions from one institution to the same sub-panel. Given the importance of this point for smaller disciplines, it is regrettable that the consultation document itself fails to address this issue. The effect of requiring single submissions from HEIs to sub-panels would be the combination of discrete organisational units. This would make the provision of a coherent statement about the environment problematic or impossible. Individual units (including departments that find themselves in the same panel for ad hoc reasons) could rightly have different approaches to resourcing, support, management, and have little coherence in theoretical and thematic interest. If the HEFCE and the Councils wish to have single submissions, they will have to forego environmental statements from coherent research units; or vice versa. We strongly support the ability to make multiple submissions.

Consultation question 5: Do you agree with our proposals for combining and weighting the output, impact and environment sub-profiles? If not please propose an alternative and explain why this is preferable.

We agree strongly that sub-profiles should be published to render each visible, but are in favour of the generation of aggregate profiles in principle. We are concerned, however, that separate challenges to the legitimacy of assessments of the impact and of quality may undermine the integrity of this combined measure, and thus of the whole exercise.

We are concerned that the aspect of previous exercises which commands most authority – the assessment of individual outputs – is to be reduced to little more than half of the overall weighting, while an untried and still rather incoherent procedure is to be allocated 25%. Given also the multiple counting of impact, and given the proposed multiplier to enhance UoA results that display excellence across the board, impact-as-measured is currently weighted at far more than 25%. Until robust measures of impact can be assured, and until more inclusive conceptions of impact can be delivered, giving such weight to impact-as-measured (which we would distinguish from real impact) risks distorting and damaging the potential impact of UK research for reasons we outline in response to question 3. We suggest that impact as currently measured be restricted to a maximum of 10% weighting.

Given that the weighting is currently a matter for consultation, we do not see any rationale for any further enhancement of aggregate profiles for those displaying excellence across all three areas of assessment. The effect of this will be to give greater weight still to impact-as-measured with the attendant dangers we outline above.

Consultation question 6: What comments do you have on the panel configuration proposed at Annex E? Where suggesting alternative options for specific UOAs, please provide the reasons for this.

We note the reduction in UoAs, and the reasoning for it.

We are concerned by a lack of clarity about the new panel structure. Although the consultation document starts from the axiom that research will be assessed at the level of ‘coherent research units’, the proposed sub-panel structure brings together disciplines which in many HEIs do not work together as ‘coherent research units’, and which have different methodological protocols and different patterns of publication and impact. For this reason, we think it essential that departments of anthropology are able to submit discrete submissions, with procedural guarantees that they will be assessed by anthropological assessors, *whatever the eventual sub-panel structure*. Requiring HEIs to put together composite submissions for groups of disciplines that have been joined for essentially bureaucratic reasons would seriously compromise our confidence in the peer review process

Given the holistic nature of anthropology, we work across an extremely wide variety of interdisciplinary engagements, whether with the sciences, social sciences and arts and humanities. Given the requirement expressed in the REF consultation document to constitute sub-panels at a scale larger than our discipline, there are many potential disciplines with which anthropology might be placed.

Whichever option is chosen, our Association considers that this will inevitably be both ad hoc and yet have some meaning, and risks therefore (a) introducing illegitimate biases into research evaluation, and (b) through its effects on university institutions, introduce damaging biases into the discipline’s future.

For this reason, we consider leaving the evaluation of a discipline to an informal grouping (an informal sub sub panel) of such an ad hoc constituted sub-panel is unacceptable. We suggest in the strongest possible terms that the constitution and operation of sub-sub panels be formalised.

If not, the biases and lack of transparency introduced will straightforwardly undermine the legitimacy of the exercise.

We note that HEFCE's brief is the selective allocation of funding, not the shaping of HEI structures, and that leaving the constitution of sub sub panels as informal therefore goes beyond this brief.

The question of panel configuration also cannot be addressed aside from questions of whether single or multiple submissions will be permissible. This is not addressed in the REF consultation document, but has been expressed by Councils. It would be wholly improper, following an ad hoc decision to locate anthropology with any particular disciplinary partner, to require a university to submit anthropology as a single unit with that partner. This would make the provision of a coherent statement about the environment problematic or impossible for that unit, but not for universities which by fate alone only had one of the constituent disciplines. Imposition of single submissions will therefore introduce unfair biases into the REF.

Our association is not able to suggest any particular sub-panel combination. Given the current informality of sub-sub panels, any particular combination will be seen to favour some UK anthropology departments over others for ad hoc reasons, because different departments support different specialisms. To reiterate, our concern is not which combination is most appropriate, but how to prevent in any combination the evaluation biases and the damaging consequences on institutional arrangements in which anthropology departments sit.

Our association speaks for social anthropology. We would note, however, that a third of anthropology submissions to RAE 2008 included biological anthropology either exclusively or as a component of a combined submission, and this needs to be factored into decisions concerning sub-panel composition and operation.

Consultation question 7: Do you agree with the proposed approach to ensuring consistency between panels?

We welcome detailed guidance to ensure consistency across panels. Panels however, incorporate many disciplinary areas, and discretion concerning working methods (para 101a) needs to take into account discipline-specific issues which will differ among the constituent disciplines of a sub-panel.

Consultation question 8: Do you have any suggested additions or amendments to the list of nominating bodies? (If suggesting additional bodies, please provide their names and addresses and indicate how they are qualified to make nominations.)

NO

Consultation question 9: Do you agree that our proposed approach will ensure that interdisciplinary research is assessed on an equal footing with other types of research? Are there further measures we should consider to ensure that this is the case and that our approach is well understood?

Consultation question 10: Do you agree that our proposals for encouraging and supporting researcher mobility will have a positive effect; and are there other measures that should be taken within the REF to this end?

No further suggestions

Consultation question 11: Are there any further ways in which we could improve the measures to promote equalities and diversity?

No further suggestions

Consultation question 12: Do you have any comments about the proposed timetable?

Given the importance attributed to impact in REF, and given the results of the pilot study on evaluating impact are not known, it would be appropriate for HEFCE to factor into the timetable further consultation over the implications of this pilot and the procedures developed in light of it.

Consultation question 13: Are there any further areas in which we could reduce burden, without compromising the robustness of the process?

To reduce the burden without compromising the robustness of the process we would favour a longer evaluation cycle.

Consultation question 14: Do you have any other comments on the proposals?

NO

Admin report

Direct debits now working well – 11k of 18k subs already collected this year – and invoices will be sent out next week to remainder.

The Onilne members directory can be announced as ready at the AGM. I will release a test version for the Committee to see before then.

I've heard nothing from ASA11, am busy with ASA10 (55 regns to-date), and haven't had a chance to think about or respond to ASA12.

Treasurer's Report

1. The current balances as per the draft annual accounts are:

- £6,000 in membership account
- £9,506 in conference account
- £29,584 in deposit account
- £30,014 in reserves account (note that this account has been topped up with about £13,000 since the last AGM.)

2. As compared to last year, the surplus for 2009 is less than 2008 by about £9,000 primarily because about £6,000 was paid in student travel grants to New Zealand conference, and income from subscriptions has reduced by about £6,500 (a situation which is being pursued).

Membership subscriptions were converted to Direct Debit arrangements last year (and all Standing Orders with members' banks have been cancelled). However, not all members have filled in the DD forms to enable us to do so, meaning that ASA funds are not as they should be.

At the AGM, we need to underline the importance of membership subscriptions for our continuing existence and work, and so it is imperative that members check that they have set this up (we have sent out several reminders already). Currently, we have DDs set up with about two thirds of the approx 600 members, with about 200 yet to pursue. On the positive side, membership volume is increasing from year to year, and the DD system is proving to be very effective as almost half of membership dues have come in for this year.

3. I have attached the draft accounts (2009) for perusal although will make the final accounts public at the AGM. A few explanatory notes for page 2:

- The conference surplus includes the ASA/AASNZ/AAS 2008 surplus and the ASA 2009 surplus of approx £1,500.
- Committee expenses are slightly higher as we had more actual meetings in 2008 than virtual meetings.
- The travel grant was to fund students to go to the 2008 conference in New Zealand.
- £1,100 was to update the Anthropology Matters site journal in a modern, open access format.
- The donation of approx £300 was for a grant used by WCAA to set up their new website.

4. Note that there will be two books posted out to members this year based on 2007 and 2008 conferences. So there will be extra costs incurred under Monograph this year.

5. Bond interest rates are still low so not much income has been generated from the Firth account. We have topped this up with a balance of approx £1,800 from the main account which represents the difference between monograph costs and royalties from the previous year's accounts (ie 2008).
6. A decision has to be made on the Lloyds bank account – whether to leave it open as a back-up account or to close it. Ro advises that it would be best to close it as the Co-Op runs in a slightly different way to other banks and would not be vulnerable to collapse.
7. Once all members have set up DD, I think it would be good for the ASA to develop a policy to award annual grants later on this year with their approval at the AGM to:
 - enable students to attend ASA conferences;
 - enable scholars from the south to attend ASA conference. Decisions would need to be taken about 9 months before the conference date, enabling scholars to arrange visas etc. On checking with account balance, it would be best to implement this later on this year in time for the conference in September 2011 in Lampeter if we can – we need to decide how many and how much to fund.

I am canvassing these ideas now so as I can revise them with Committee's input in time for the AGM.

Ethics Officer Report

I am slowly getting back to some of the ethics related queries after giving birth to a little boy in January. These are the following things that I hope to address:

- **Belfast panel on ethics and reconciliation:** I am planning to convene and chair an open forum in the Belfast ASA on ethics and reconciliation. I am in the process of confirming speakers.
- **Ethics meeting in London** – I will be attending a meeting in London which is being planned jointly between the Association of Research Ethics Committees, the Academy and the Social Research Association to discuss the possibility of producing some general principles of ethical research practice for all social science.
- **ASA Ethics code** Following discussions in the last meeting I will be updating the ASA ethics code and send it to all the committee members for their feedback before sending it out to all ASA members and then taking it to the AGM in Belfast.

Updates on:

- **Blog – Ian Harper?**
- **ASA 2012?**

- **Pnina Werbner query:** Ethics of participant observation/cultural events. I shall be getting in touch with Pnina about her queries. **Please see our email exchanges below and if the committee has any suggestion as to how to take this forward that would be much appreciated.**

EMAIL EXCHANGES WITH PNINA:

- **From:** Pnina Werbner [mailto:P.Werbner@keele.ac.uk]
Sent: 29 January 2010 07:54
To: p.werbner@appsoc.keele.ac.uk; Mookherjee, Nayanika
Cc: Professor James Fairhead; G.Marvin@roehampton.ac.uk
Subject: Re: Ethics of participant observation/cultural events

•

Dear Nayanika, James and Garry,

The code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association

<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>

at least has the merit of stressing the flexibility of continued ongoing dialogue and the fact that it cannot be sorted out fully and comprehensively in advance of going to the field and that a signed form is not necessary. These are all issues which university ethics committees need to recognise.

(4) informed consent process is dynamic and continuous; the process should be initiated in the project design and continue through implementation by way of dialogue and negotiation with those studied. Researchers are responsible for identifying and complying with the various informed consent codes, laws and regulations affecting their projects. Informed consent, for the purposes of this code, does not necessarily imply or require a particular written or signed form. It is the quality of the consent, not the format, that is relevant.

Further the code recognises that anonymity cannot always be preserved:

(3) Anthropological researchers must determine in advance whether their hosts/providers of information wish to remain anonymous or receive recognition, and make every effort to comply with those wishes. Researchers must present to their research participants the possible impacts of the choices, and make clear that despite their best efforts, anonymity may be compromised or recognition fail to materialize.

There is, however, as far as I can tell, no mention of the study of cultural or public events, rituals, meetings and the like, where many strangers are likely to be present, unknown to the researcher (and indeed, to the organisers). This is the stuff of fieldwork and participant observation. Also no mention of the use of photography. I looked at performance studies and visual anthropology on Google but nothing came up.

However, the AAA guidelines do give some guidance and protection to anthropologists in the field I think.

Pnina

Original Message-----

>From: Pnina Werbner [mailto:p.werbner@appsoc.keele.ac.uk]

>Sent: 28 January 2010 17:33

>To: Mookherjee, Nayanika

>Subject: RE: Ethics of participant observation/cultural events

>

>Dear Nayanika,

>

>This is not nearly enough in the current climate. We need to make a

>bold and authoritative statement. Otherwise we are in serious danger

>of breaking ethical guidelines and particularly so in research in

>Britain/Europe. Do you want to set up a committee? I would really like
>to be part of it, and perhaps Paul Henley. Jonathan Parry might be
>willing and someone in development perhaps (Katy Gardner?)
>
>Pnina
>
On 28 Jan 2010 at 15:50, Mookherjee, Nayanika wrote:
>
>> Dear Pnina,
>>
>> Writing briefly as we slowly try to recover from our emergency c
>> section.
>>
>> The ethics of participant observation has been a sticky one in
>> anthropology and that is why I feel nothing has been written
>> directly about it at least to my knowledge. Geertz's chapter [below]
>> is an interesting account of secrecies during research and could be
>> made to reflect on participant observation. Michael jackshon's piece
>> [below]
>is
>> on embodiment but offers a take on reading rituals. Pat caplan's
>> book ethics and anthropology [2003] and a recent book called taking
>> sides: ethics and politics - might also be able to address your
>> queries
>Pnina.
>>
>> Geertz, Clifford. 2000. 'Thinking as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions
>of
>> Anthropological Fieldwork in the New States,' 21-41, in Clifford
>Geertz,
>> Available Light: Anthropological reflections on Philosophical
>> Topics. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
>>
>> Jackson, M. 1983. "Knowledge of the Body", in MAN (N.S.)18: 327-345.
>>
>> Hope this helps.
>>
>> Best, nayanika
>>
>> -----Original Message-----
>> From: James Fairhead [mailto:j.r.fairhead@sussex.ac.uk]
>> Sent: 27 January 2010 09:38
>> To: P.Werbner@keele.ac.uk
>> Cc: G.Marvin@roehampton.ac.uk; Mookherjee, Nayanika
>> Subject: Re: Ethics of participant observation/cultural events
>>

>> Dear Pnina,

>> Many thanks for this. Whilst there are several works that address

>ethics

>> of

>> qualitative research (Ethics in qualitative research By Melanie L.

>> Mauthner) there is little by way of a 'statement' beyond the ethical

>> guidelines of anthropologists and sociologists. In the early 2000s

>when

>> the

>> research councils were developing their ethical policies this issue

>came

>> up

>> (as did the ethics of focus groups) with some in the medical

>> sciences finding that participant observation and focus groups could

>> not be demonstrated to achieve the 'gold standard' of informed

>> consent. (Of course what is 'informed' in informed consent in

>> medical research in many settings is open to question and the gold

>> standard tarnishes.). The research councils agreed to go their own

>> way, and there is still a debate

>between

>>

>> them about what it is to be ethical.

>> Film makers have clearly gone some way to addressing this and I will

>> pass this to Garry Marvin who is represents the visua/media side of

>> ASA, as well as to Nayanika Mookherjee who is our ethics focal

>> point. Sorry not to have been more helpful. Perhaps it is something

>> that we should address further. (incidentally, given the hacking

>> into UEA university emails last December during the climate-war,

>> perhaps we should also question whether data stored in university

>> systems is in fact confidential?) best James

>>

>> --On 27 January 2010 08:01 +0000 Pnina Werbner

>> <P.Werbner@keele.ac.uk>

>

>> wrote:

>>

>> > Dear James,

>> >

>> > Have you had a chance to think of where I can find a statement in

>> > anthropology on the ethics of participant observation and

>> > especially of public events (rituals, meetings, carnivals, etc.) and secondly,

>> > the use of visual material (pictures, film) which obviously subvert

>> > so-called confidentiality?

>> >

>> > I really need it for Keele.

>> >Pnina

ASA Publications Officer's report

12 March 2009

James Staples

1. ASA Monograph 46

Finally in press after – following a rejection of copyright permission from Banksy to use one of his images on the cover – a last minute change of cover photograph.

2. ASA Monograph 47

Veronica Strang and Mark Busse are working on the final edits of their chapters, and expect to have them to us and Berg by the end of this month, well on target for a publication date in 2010 (probably around September/October time) as planned. Signed contracts for all authors now collected.

3. ASA Monograph 48

David Shankland has been reminded about contributor contracts, which he's currently chasing, and we're expecting his ms in September 2010, allowing for a publication date of around April/May 2011 – bringing us back up to date.

4. Fardon and Gledhill volume

Still waiting on information about this volume from James F so I can chase Richard and John to find out what is happening: **JAMES F: DO YOU HAVE ANY INFO ON THIS FOR ME?**

5. Permissions

- a) Access Copyright, the Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency, forwarded a request from a Canadian university for permission to place 47 pages (1-47) from *The structural study of myth and totemism* (ISBN: 0422725307) on a password protected intranet site for 150 students. Their default rate for digital/intranet use is \$0.15 (Canadian) per page per user. Any royalties collected will be distributed to the Copyright Licensing Agency in London who will then distribute to the ASA. Permission granted on those terms.
- b) **Dorothy Hodgson** (Rutgers) requested permission to reprint material from a book chapter she wrote for Prina Werbner's *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism* in her forthcoming^{[L]_{SEP}} authored book, *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous*. Permission granted.
- c) **Marilyn Strathern** (Cambridge) requested permission for re-publication, in Portuguese, of her chapter in the Strang and Busse ASA 47 volume ('Sharing, stealing and borrowing simultaneously') in a collection of her work being published by University Press of the^{[L]_{SEP}} University of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Permission granted.

C-SAP Report

C-SAP/HEA Funding Situation

The swingeing cuts to the HE sector continue to impact on the academy which has been asked to reduce expenditure by 305 over the next 3 years. This has been passed on to subject centres. The resulting re-organisation of C-SAP has involved a through review of all our operational activities to ensure that we will meet the strategic directions of the Centre and of those set by the Academy funders and the need to show impact on the thematic areas across the centres outputs. These were issues that were also raised by members of the various reference groups who wanted to see the thematic areas raised from the disciplines approached on an equitable basis. Only one academic coordinator now remains (me!), but between the regular staff and our 'associates' the team has disciplinary expertise in all the C-SAP subjects.

An Academy Board awayday took place on 3 and 4 February in York to discuss the future of the academy and subject centres, so I present an abridged version of the outcome below:

It is important to note that no final decisions were taken at the awayday. The purpose was to look at how the organisation needs to decide and describe its core purpose and identify, and how best to work with its main stakeholders and create the optimum structure for the Academy. The Board made a great deal of headway in identifying stakeholders, with a consensus that the Academy's primary stakeholders are students, HEIs (in particular at PVC, Dean and Head of School levels) and the funding bodies for the different parts of the UK. The Academy is, and will remain, about improving the student learning experience. However, we have a task to unpick what that means in practice and to determine where we should concentrate our efforts.

Three areas emerged most strongly from the awayday:

- The quality and professionalisation of teaching;
- The flexibility of the 'offer' to students, so that higher education can be delivered in different ways to suit a diverse student body;
- The area of graduate outcomes, which means looking at what people who have been through higher education draw from their time at university or college and how that then affects both their own lives and society and the economy.

Discussions on organisational models have not at this stage ruled any options in or out. A few things are however very clear:

To be able to improve the student learning experience the Academy will need to continue to engage with the disciplines and to draw on the very extensive networks of contacts that have been built up over the last few years.

There was frequent reference in discussions during the awayday to other, successful aspects of our work including our postgraduate surveys, NSS, Open Educational

Resources and our ability to take on issues that go across disciplines, such as Education for Sustainable Development. We have some very solid achievements on which to build. that is the date of the Board meeting that will agree the broad structure for the Academy and task the Executive Team to finalise the details, including of jobs, for a final decision in September.

This was followed by a letter from Sean Mackney, the acting director of the HEA, to the VC's of institutions that house subject centres; committing to support activity in 2010-11 at a reduced level of funding and to fund staff contracts in the subject centres until **at least** December 2010

So the upshot of this is that C-SAP continues to exist in the short term, but in the long term there may be a move towards a reduction in the number of subject centres. Whether or not this occurs it seems inevitable that activity will be driven by thematic priorities set by the funding councils but that makes disciplinary networks even more important as we will need to be able to disseminate outcomes and respond to discipline specific needs.

ASA/C-SAP teaching prize

This was highly successful this year. It really increased the amount of anthropology activity at the C-SAP conference. We hope to be able to present the award again this year, however there will not be a C-SAP November conference, so perhaps it can be presented at the ASA 2011 conference?

Early Career Lecturers Events

Plans for this event are going well. We are still looking for a senior anthropologist to come for a 1 hour or 90 minute session on the Tuesday morning before the conference starts to take part in a Q&A session. Any suggestions/volunteers gratefully received.

External Examiners

C-SAP has organised an event on 19th May to bring together representatives from C-SAP, QAA, and the professional associations, to discuss and share practice around the process of external examining.

Speakers already booked for the event will be:

- Professor Donna Lee, Co-Director, C-SAP
- Tim Burton, QAA
- Mark Jeffery, University of Birmingham
- Professor Neil Collins, PSA and University College Cork
- Professor Stuart Croft, BISA

I have been asked to see if I can get someone from the ASA, or at least an anthropologist with experience of external examining to speak also. I have tried the HODS list but no volunteers.