

Circular

Annual TRAC and QAV Returns for Academic Year 2006/07

Date: 23 November 2007
Reference: W07/47HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Response by: 31 January 2008
Further Information: TRAC reporting queries should be directed towards either:
Richard Hirst
Telephone: (029)20 682253
Email: richard.hirst@hefcw.ac.uk; or
Nick Williams
Telephone: (029)20 682299
Email: nick.williams@hefcw.ac.uk

QAV process information is available from the Research Councils website www.rcuk.ac.uk.
Queries on this process should be directed to:
Gareth MacDonald
Telephone: (01793) 413222

This circular requests institutions to submit their annual Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) Return and the Research Councils' Quality Assurance Validation (QAV) Return for 2006/07.

This document is available online, in large print, Braille, on CD and on audio CD and cassette. Should you or someone you know require this in an alternative format, please contact us on (029) 2068 2280 or email info@hefcw.ac.uk.



Introduction

1. This circular asks you to submit your institution's annual Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) return and the Research Councils' Quality Assurance Validation (QAV) return (see its letter dated 06 November 2007) for 2006/07 by **31 January 2008**.
2. You will be aware of the increasing importance of TRAC data to support institutional decision making and to inform public policy making. In both these areas the provision of timely and reliable cost information is increasingly important.
3. In reporting these data, please confirm that:
 - the costs reported have been prepared in accordance with the TRAC requirements – as set out in Section B (minimum requirements) of Part III of the TRAC Guidance, issued by the Joint Costing and Pricing Steering Group in June 2005 and subsequent updates
 - the income has been prepared in accordance with the Funding Councils' requirements set out in Annex 16 of that guidance
 - tests for reasonableness have been carried out and the results of these have been presented to a Board Committee to give assurance that the outcome is fair and reasonable, as required in part II, Chapter C.1.
 - information submitted to the Research Councils is a true statement.
4. The annual TRAC return also asks institutions to provide details of the committee, authorised by the governing body, responsible for confirming compliance with the costing standards. These standards are set out in Part II of the TRAC Guidance, Chapter B.2. In providing assurance to the head of institution, the relevant committee should seek assurance from the internal auditors to confirm:
 - that they have reviewed progress on meeting the annual TRAC requirements
 - that the processes in place comply with the TRAC Guidance
 - the institution has implemented TRAC methods on a robust basis.

Submitting returns for 2006/07

TRAC Returns

5. A sample of a TRAC return form can be downloaded from the TRAC Guidance web pages at www.jcpsg.ac.uk/guidance/annexes (Annex 16). Your institution's individualised template for completion of the TRAC **data** return should be downloaded and submitted through the HEFCE extranet. A copy of this letter will be sent to your Director or Head of Finance, with details of how to access the extranet.

6. A hard copy of the completed TRAC return, signed by you (as head of institution) should also be sent by 31 January 2008 to **Clare Sutton at HEFCW, Linden Court, The Orchards, Ilex Close, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5DZ**. We will treat the information provided as strictly confidential. We will report to the Welsh Assembly Government on the sector aggregate TRAC return data only, which we expect to publish.

QAV Returns

7. Samples of the QAV return forms can be downloaded from the Research Councils' web-site at www.rcuk.ac.uk/aboutrcuk/efficiency/qav. The QAV method form should be downloaded and submitted directly to **Gareth MacDonald, RCUK Head of Assurance, the Research Councils, Polaris House, North Star Avenue, Swindon, SN2 1UH**.
8. Your institution's individualised template for completion of the QAV **data** return should be downloaded and submitted through the HEFCE extranet.
9. This year there will be no separate request for benchmarking data as relevant data collected through the QAV process will be used for this purpose. Benchmarking feedback reports will be made available for download from the HEFCE extranet in due course.

Freedom of Information

10. HEFCW, HEFCE and RCUK are covered by the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Act gives a public right of access to any information held by a public authorities. In the event of a request for information contained in TRAC and / or QAV returns, we have a duty to decide whether information should be released or treated as confidential. Requests must be considered on a case-by-case basis, and we can refuse to disclose information only in specific circumstances. Should we receive a request, we will give careful consideration to whether the release of this information would, or would be likely to harm the commercial interests of institutions submitting the data.
11. For further information about the TRAC reporting requirements, please contact Richard Hirst or Nick Williams. Details of all HEFCW contacts are on the web at http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/Contact_Us/who_who.aspx. Further information on the QAV process is available from the Research Councils web-site (www.rcuk.ac.uk) and any queries about this process should be directed to Gareth MacDonald (tel 01793 413222).