

Cultures for excellence



International Seminar on Leadership & Management
of the Humanities, Social Sciences and Arts in Chilean
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3 cases

1. Audit culture in the UK: teaching quality and Research Assessment exercise (RAE)
2. The Warwick Way
3. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) structures and procedures

audit culture

Performance management in UK is heavily audited
Teaching

- h Teaching Quality Audit (2001), discipline based
- h Institutional Audit, QAA (2008), institutional with up to 5 subject areas for detailed scrutiny

some problems

- h Paper audit trail
- h What is measured is distant from the classroom
- h Experience in Philosophy at Warwick
- h Perverse incentives - the student voice?
- h National Student Survey

Research - RAE

RAE 2008

- h 15 Main Panels with 67 sub-panels each with approx 15 members
- h e.g. Panel N:
 - h 59 Classics, Ancient History, Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
 - h 60 Philosophy
 - h 61 Theology, Divinity & Religious Studies
 - h 62 History

RAE 2001

Methodology:

- h Academics submit 4 outputs
- h Peer reviewed by sub-panel
- h Departments graded 1 – 5, plus 5* as a function of proportion of academics graded 'international'.

Result:

Lots of 5 grade departments and expensive for Government!

RAE 2008

Methodology

- h 4 outputs per academic each output graded by sub-panel on scale 1* - 4*
- h Profile for Department as proportion of outputs in each category
- h Linear ranking of departments

RAE results

'Dear Vice-Chancellor of [insert institution name],
Just to confirm that Evidence's RAE 2008 data application "We Can Do What We Want With Numbers Like These"TM shows that you are one of the 159 institutions in the UK's top five for research'

Jonathan Adams, Director Evidence Ltd, *Times Higher Education*, January 2009, pp.28-9

RAE 2008

- h Lots of rich data, no translation into simple answers for stakeholders
- h GPA ranking – not enough information, potentially misleading
- h Power score (share of 4* and 3* in discipline) favours larger departments

Purpose?:

distribution of core research funding from Government (not project funding)

RAE some problems

h Gamesmanship

h hiring frenzy (cp. Australian case)

h volume measure

Variation across disciplines:

Anthropology > 20% 4*

Education, Psychology < 10% 4*

Big Science, a few @ 35-40% 4*

Arts, cases as high as 65% 4*

UK audit culture

- h Considerable antagonism from academics regarding audit culture and KPIs
- h Much scepticism that KPIs measure anything that really matters
- h Anecdotal evidence that teaching audit has corrupted debates about teaching
- h In RAE – current fierce debate in defence of peer review and opposition to metric-based assessment, especially in Humanities and Social Science

Warwick

- h Founded in 1964, first undergraduates (450) 1965
- h In 40 years risen to top rank of UK Universities, regularly in top 6 places in most league tables (RAE 2008, 7th overall),
- h Reputation as entrepreneurial, innovative, capacity to act fast
- h Strong links with business and industry
- h Very high quality Humanities and Social Science

How was this done in 40 years?

The Warwick Way

Distinguish

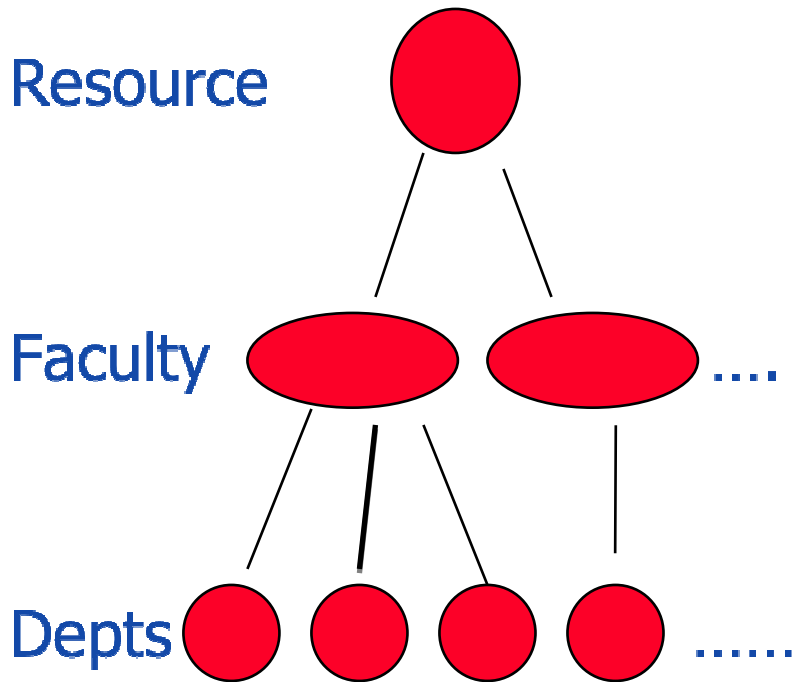
(a) Goals – e.g., research excellence, innovative research-led teaching

(b) Objectives – e.g., to get into the top 50 in global University rankings

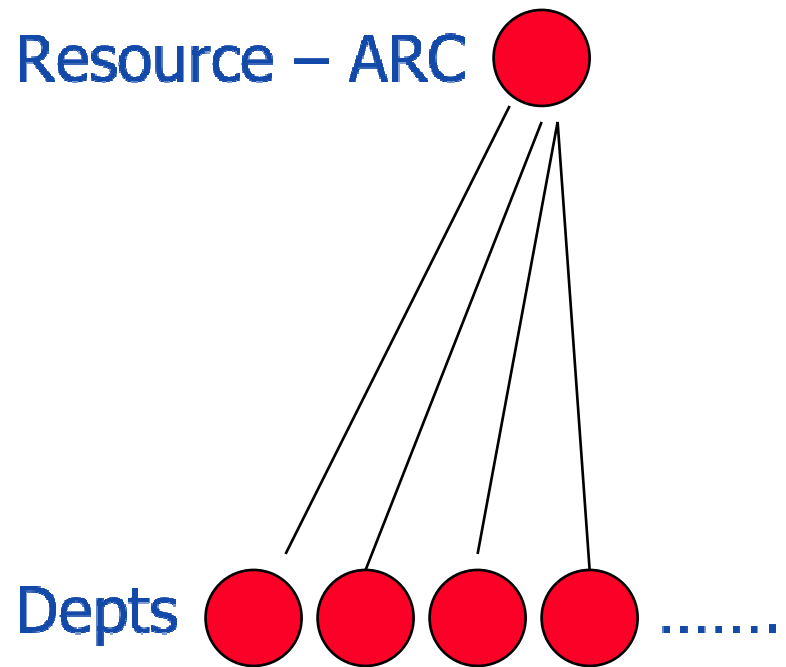
Is the management culture driven by (a) or (b)?

2 structures

Common structure



Warwick



ARC – Academic Resourcing Committee

ARC = DVC, PVCs for research, 3 Chairs of Faculty
+ one further representative from each Faculty

Academic membership

Single committee that engages Heads of Department in academic debate re bids from Philosophy, Engineering, History, Psychology, etc.....

ARC - advantages

- h Fast – potential for very quick response
- h Informed – negligible loss of information
- h Feedback – rapid response and redraft
- h Scale – normally funds available for opportunistic and strategic innovation
- h Short lines of communication
- h regular incentive to innovate

Note: HoDs are the power base, not Chairs of Faculty

Culture

The conversation regarding innovation, development, research, hiring etc is never far from where the generic terms 'excellence', 'cutting edge research', etc., get their real content.

Limitations

- h Size
- h Warwick has just 29 departments
- h Very focussed institution (though not all things work fast!)
- h Very sensitive to role of key office holders

Moral?

- h The management culture retains the character of the academic debates within the disciplines
- h ARC moderates between Engineering and History, between Philosophy and Law, etc.
- h ARC does not use the language of audit

Vision 2015

- h Bottom – up generation of Vision 2015 strategy that drew upon Warwick culture
- h All staff contributed to ideas
- h Panels established with reps from all levels of staff to filter proposals
- h Senior management team + Panel Chairs select final 'wish-list'
- h Senior management team (academic majority) finalise strategy

Vision 2015 – top goals

“We intend to make Warwick an undisputed world leader in research and scholarship”

h 45 ISI Highly Cited researchers by 2015

h Institute of Advanced Study

h 3 new interdisciplinary research centres

h Research collaborations with overseas partners

h Double the number of postgraduate research students

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/about/vision2015>

AHRC

- h Arts and Humanities Research Council
- h Full council status 2005, previously A & H Research Board.
- h Responsible for funded research in A & H
- h And for postgraduate funding – scholarships for MA and PhD

Postgraduate funding

- h Individual competition for scholarship to 2008
- h Block Grant scheme from 2009 – block grant proposals make strategic case for University to host x number of p/g awards over 5 years
- h Case includes: environment, subject specific training, generic skills training, resources etc.
- h Monitoring during 5 years to be done by University – light touch by AHRC
- h Proposals evaluated by AHRC Peer Review College members

AHRC – research grants

Old structure:

- h Subject panels, e.g. Panel for Law, Philosophy & Religious Studies
- h Applicant nominated reviewer + expert reviews from Peer Review College.
- h Panel members can exercise their own subject specialist knowledge – they also review

AHRC research grants

New structure (from 2009):

- h No panels
- h No nominated reviewer
- h PRC gives expert reviews
- h PRC provides members for quarterly Prioritisation Panels
- h PP members do NOT employ subject specialist knowledge, they moderate the PRC reviews

conclusions

Why is the culture issue important?

- h It seems to be at work: Warwick & AHRC
- h They employ a common 'dispersed' or 'flat' structure for managing performance
- h The use of measurable performance indicators – the audit trail – is anchored in the dispersed culture of discourse about goals

Making the new

Why is it so hard to prescribe for excellence and expertise?

- h Managing expertise

- h The case for 'flat' or 'dispersed' structures is not political or collegial; it's about the conditions for knowledge creation

- h It's about the open-endedness of the academic enterprise