

## Response ID ANON-SEUV-HD5R-P

Submitted to **Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework: Subject-level**  
Submitted on **2018-05-17 13:38:20**

### Introduction

#### i What is your name?

**Name:**

Judith Mudd

#### ii What is your email address?

**Email:**

judith.mudd@britsoc.org.uk

#### iii I am a:

Representative organisation, business, or trade body

**Please state:**

#### iv If applicable, what is your organisation's name?

**Organisation:**

The British Sociological Association

#### v Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?

No

**Reason for confidentiality:**

### Subject classification system

#### 1 To define 'subjects' in subject-level TEF, do you:

Yes - agree

**If you answered No, what other systems could be used and why?:**

The British Sociological Association (BSA) is in agreement with the use of CAH2 with the provisos as below in response to 1.b.

No

**If you answered Yes, please explain why.:**

Whilst not proposing any changes the BSA would suggest that the panels established to support the work of Model B fully reflect the disciplinary strengths and traditions of the CAH2 classification. In the case of sociology this would include membership drawing upon disciplinary learned societies and their nominations for panels.

### Duration of award

#### 2 Do you agree that we should have a longer duration and re-application period in subject-level TEF?

Yes - agree

**The focus of this question is on whether we should extend the duration. However, please provide as much detail as you can on your preferred length for the duration and/or re-application period.:**

The BSA agrees with a longer duration and re-application period. However, we would encourage consideration of the forthcoming REF and the workload for universities, especially given the interweaving of teaching and research across disciplines and departments.

### Overview of subject-level TEF design

#### 3 Should subject-level TEF retain the existing key elements of the provider-level framework (including the 10 TEF criteria, the same suite of metrics, benchmarking, submissions, an independent panel assessment process and the rating system)?

Yes - agree

**If you answered No, please explain why.:**

The BSA agrees with the retention of these key elements as to change these now would not enhance the potential to document change.

#### **4 For the design of subject-level TEF, should the Government adopt:**

A 'bottom up' approach (ie a form of Model B)

**Please explain your answer. When answering this question, please consider the underlying principles that define Model A (a 'by exception' approach) versus model B (a 'bottom up' approach), and which principle you think we should adopt for subject-level TEF. While we are also interested in detailed comments on the specific design of each model, the final design will likely be a refined version of those presented in the consultation document. This question is therefore seeking views about which underlying approach you prefer. In your response, you may wish to consider the evaluation criteria set out in the specification for the first year of pilots (see below).:**

The BSA would strongly encourage adoption of Model B as this allows for a deeper assessment of the disciplinary areas and interdisciplinary work.

#### **Model A: Generating exceptions**

##### **5 Under Model A, do you agree with the proposed approach for identifying subjects that will be assessed, which would constitute:**

Not Answered

**If you answered No, please explain why. You may wish to comment on variations or options that we have not mentioned:**

We agree that the initial hypothesis rule would suffice but how might this be applied fairly? We have concerns that this leaves discretion to institutions to use the TEF for purposes that are not intended. If the TEF is to operate Top down it must do so only on the basis of a clear and unambiguous rule that can be applied consistently across all institutions.

We also note that the translation rule requires the collection of precisely the same data at subject level that would be required in Model B – this is also a factor in our preference for Model B

Not Answered

**Please explain your answer. You may wish to comment on options for identifying the number of additional subjects or on any variations or options that we have not mentioned.:**

#### **Model A: Relationship between provider and subject assessment**

##### **6 In Model A, should the subject ratings influence the provider rating?**

Not Answered

**Please provide as much detail as you can on why and how this relationship should be brought about.:**

There is the issue of bias in the sample of subjects selected and the likely influence of this should be recognised as providers' choices could unduly influence the rating.

#### **Model B: Relationship between provider and subject assessment**

##### **7 In Model B, do you agree with the method for how the subject ratings inform the provider-level rating?**

Yes - agree

**You may wish to comment on the method for calculating the subject-based initial hypothesis, as well as how this is used in the assessment process. We also welcome alternative approaches that do not use the subject-based initial hypothesis.:**

We agree but would wish to ensure that the panel memberships reflect the depth of knowledge and skills in teaching and learning from the disciplines as grouped under CAH2.

#### **Metrics**

##### **8 Do you agree that grade inflation should only apply in the provider-level metrics?**

Not Answered

**If you are able, please provide information about how grade boundaries are set within institutions to inform whether our rationale applies consistently across the sector. Comments on the potential impacts of applying grade inflation only at provider-level are also welcome.:**

Grade inflation is a problematic assertion; if teaching improves then it is extremely likely that grades will too. Thus we propose that this metric is removed.

##### **9 What are your views on how we are approaching potential differences in the distribution of subject ratings?**

**You may wish to comment on our approach to very high and low absolute values, clustered metrics and regulation by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).:**

Differences could reflect a range of disciplinary issues; traditions, content and teaching methods. Panels developed as per Model B might help to further recognise these differences and embed these in a peer assessment of the subject area teaching.

## 10 To address the issue of non-reportable metrics:

Not Answered

### If you answered No, please explain why.:

The non-reportable metrics were considered ambiguous and requiring further clarification. We were particularly uneasy with the definition of small groups and the level at which these would be defined; programmes, subjects, courses. Again we considered the implementation and assessment potential of Model B to offer a deeper and more meaningful approach.

Not Answered

### Please explain your answer.:

## Additional Evidence

## 11 Do you:

No - disagree

### If you answered No, please explain why.:

Given the amount of work which has gone in to developing benchmarks with a notable contribution from learned societies and academic colleagues, and over a number of years, we were concerned that the Benchmarks might become 'a voluntary declaration'. We would strongly encourage the adoption and integration of the Benchmark Statements into the process as these are valued and have credibility.

Not Answered

### Please outline which subjects should have mandatory declaration and why.:

## Interdisciplinarity

## 12 Do you agree with our approach to capturing interdisciplinary provision (in particular, joint and multi-subject combined courses)?

No - strongly disagree

### Please explain your answer. We want to ensure that providers are not discouraged from taking an interdisciplinary approach as an unintended consequence of subject-level TEF. We therefore welcome feedback on how the proposed approach will impact on providers and students.:

The definition of interdisciplinary is one of joint degrees or combined studies. How would the proposed model take account of programmes in health and social care or sustainable development? There is an inherent tension here as we are encouraged to develop thematic interdisciplinary programmes and teaching teams. The REF is also promoting interdisciplinary research. Yet this definition is subject driven and narrow; and fails to capture the innovative teaching developments in such areas as gender, race, environment and sustainability.

## Teaching Intensity

## 13 On balance, are you in favour of introducing a measure of teaching intensity in the TEF, and what might be the positive impacts or unintended consequences of implementing a measure of teaching intensity?

No - strongly disagree

### Please explain your answer.:

No we are not in favour of this. Student bodies are heterogeneous and courses, programmes and institutional approaches differ. The dynamism of many disciplines and of innovative teaching methods might well be stifled by attempts to measure teaching intensity. What a course requires is stipulated in the learning outcomes and this may include self-directed learning, research for a dissertation, reading weeks, peer group projects and presentations.

## 14 What forms of contact and learning (e.g. lectures, seminars, work-based learning) should and should not be included in a measure of teaching intensity?

### Question 14:

See above. If the decision is made to proceed with this measure, then we would argue for a much broader definition including reading weeks and self-directed learning.

## 15 What method(s)/option(s) do you think are best to measure teaching intensity? Please state if there are any options that you strongly oppose, and suggest any alternative options.

### Question 15:

Again if it is decided to proceed with this aspect we would suggest that the teaching hours and approaches as stipulated in course handbooks be an accepted measure.

## Other comments

**16 Do you have any comments on the design of subject-level TEF that are not captured in your response to the preceding questions in this consultation?**

**Question 16:**

We would encourage an appreciation of the multiple functions of universities teaching a wide range of undergraduates. That the Benchmarks have been developed with disciplinary reflection and care should be acknowledged. As noted above, a key concern is that innovative ideas for teaching might be stifled as the metrics encourage universities to play safe and ensure their teaching provision strongly adheres to what will be clearly measured.

Where graduates find themselves post their degree reflects the different social class origins, gender and ethnicity. The proposed methodology for the TEF is flawed as it seeks to oversimplify a complex process as students progress across their degree programmes.