



EMRC Science Policy Briefing on health research classification approaches

Beverley Sherbon

Medical Research Council

MRC | Medical Research Council

Background – EMRC & Science Policy Briefings

- European Medical Research Councils (EMRC) is the Membership Organisation for 37 medical research councils in 30 European countries under the ESF.
- Its mission is to promote innovative medical research and its clinical application towards improved human health.
- EMRC has a broad remit and offers authoritative strategic advice for policy making, research management, ethics and better health services.
- Activities include:
 - Science Policy (White Papers, Science Policy Briefings, Position Papers)
 - Forward Looks
 - Exploratory Workshops (emerging fields)
 - EUROCORES and Research Networking Programmes
 - Research Conferences

► www.esf.org/emrc

Background cont.

- Working Group 3 of the ESF Members Organisation Forum on Evaluation has two strands of work:
 - Classification and comparative analysis of portfolios
 - Approaches for output collection and analysis
- Classification strand
 - Workshop to identify and discuss the approaches to classification used across the Member Organisations
 - Expert group meeting in March 2011 with broader participants (European Commission, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Health Organisation)
 - To facilitate production of a Science Policy Briefing (SPB) on Health Research Portfolio Classification.

SPB on Health Research Classification Systems - Overview

- Introduction & benefits
- What are the key challenges?
- What are the key characteristics of successful research classification systems?
- Recommendations

Introduction & benefits

Research organisations require high quality approaches for the classification of research portfolios for various reasons, these include:

- to monitor and communicate progress against strategy
- to track changes in research portfolios over time
- to manage the application process (assigning application to a board or for reviewer selection)
- to produce research portfolio statistics
- to structure research information systems

Research efforts are global, and increasingly research organisations want to co-ordinate their funding with other organisations, to jointly fund research and benchmark their progress internationally.

Benefits of a common approach to classification of research portfolios:

- Communication
- Identification of new opportunities
- Comparable analysis
- Collaboration
- Efficiency

Key Challenges

- There is no single ideal classification approach
- Difference in operational processes across funding organisations
- Overlap between scientific areas/inter-disciplinary research
- Training and documented guidance
- Resources / overheads
- Unit of analysis
- Quality assurance / quality control

Classification systems currently used in health research

- OECD Frascati
- Australian & New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC)
- US National Institutes of Health Research, Condition, and Disease Categorization System (NIH RCDC)
- Medical Subject Headings (MeSH)
- The Common Scientific Outline (CSO)
- UK Health Research Classification System (HRCS)
- G-Finder
- Research Organisation specific ones

... and of course many systems for other areas of research!

Key Characteristics of successful research classification systems

What does an ideal one look like?

- Simple and relevant
- Fit for purpose
- Consistent over time
- Common between research organisations
- multiple dimensions
- Flexible

Recommendations

1. Continued sharing of expertise in this area should be encouraged.
2. Common approaches for the classification of research portfolios should be sought.
3. Use of the HRCS should be encouraged as the leading approach for comparison and joint analysis of specifically *health* research portfolio information.
4. A common solution for classifying research portfolios in disciplines outside of medical research should be sought.

Recommendations

5. Methods should be explored to translate portfolio information between classification approaches.
6. Central support is needed to manage and co-ordinate a common approach.
7. Methodological developments are needed to reduce the cost of classification and increase flexibility.

SPB on Health Research Classification Systems - timeline

- Currently awaiting final comments and being redrafted.
- Formal external peer review
- EMRC Standing Committee approval
- ESF Chief Executive approval
- Final version should be ready in November.

Questions? Comments?

beverley.sherbon@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk