Research Services Staff in Australian Universities: An Investigation of Profile, Nomenclature, Professional Alignment, Role, Workplace Relationships, and Policy Implementation.

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Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education and the
Centre for the Study of Research Training and Impact (SORTI)
The University of Newcastle
Australia

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Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Acknowledgement of Authorship

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research, the greater part of which was completed subsequent to admission to candidature for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy.

Signed __________________________________________
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Research is recognised globally as vital to social and economic development and in progressing national interest. Universities are at the forefront of knowledge generation and it is not surprising that the work of researchers, their productivity, development and contribution to society and the economy attract a great deal of interest from governments and are the subject of a large body of research literature. In contrast, the management and administrative support of research is just now beginning to be acknowledged as an important element in the overall research endeavour, not least because the systems around research in universities have increased in complexity.

Drawing on a mixed method design including a national on-line questionnaire (n = 194) and multiple interviews (n = 37), this thesis contributes a comprehensive picture of the operating landscape of research managers and administrators in centralised Research Service offices in Australian universities. It explores their profile, how they perceive and interpret their roles and responsibilities and the dynamics of their working relationships. The studied group was found to be predominantly female, typically aged in their 40s and degree qualified with a number of profile findings revealing significant differences by gender.

Participant nomenclature preferences highlighted significant shortcomings in current staffing terminology. Given this, the salience of a nomenclature ladder to address both visibility and aspiration of university research support staff was explored. Findings on professional self-concept, professional characteristics, growing specialisations and perceived stakeholder regard provided insights into the professional alignment of this occupational group. Perception of role was defined largely by the intensity and focus of interactions with students and researchers. At the time of study, sector preparations for the anticipated Research Quality Framework (RQF) provided the contextual setting in which detailed inquiry into participant involvement in policy implementation was conducted.

Finally, the thesis offers a model of engagement through which the interactive dynamic between research support staff and researchers can be interpreted and understood. Through this model, identification of areas of potential mismatch and frustration from the standpoint of research support staff can be used to develop organisational strategies to foster and enrich the contribution of this group with the added potential to ultimately enhance university research performance.
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<td>ACU</td>
<td>Association of Commonwealth Universities</td>
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<td>Association of University Administration</td>
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<td>AUQA</td>
<td>Australian Universities Quality Agency</td>
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<td>ARMA</td>
<td>Association of Research Managers and Administrators</td>
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<td>ARMS</td>
<td>Australasian Research Management Society</td>
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<td>ATEM</td>
<td>Association for Tertiary Education Management</td>
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<td>ATN</td>
<td>Australian Technology Network</td>
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<td>CPSU</td>
<td>Community and Public Sector Union</td>
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<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
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<td>DEST</td>
<td>Department of Education, Science and Training</td>
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<td>Go8</td>
<td>Group of Eight</td>
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<td>Higher Education Funding Council for England</td>
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<td>IRU</td>
<td>Innovative Research Universities</td>
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<td>Leslie H Martin Institute</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past two decades the role and importance of research in universities has achieved a high profile in the international debate on higher education and future economic and social development. Around the globe the competition to achieve excellence in research has escalated, while at the same time the environment for research in universities has undergone profound change. Although there is substantial literature with respect to the aspirations, roles and activities of academics and their career progression as researchers, relatively little is known about those who provide operational support to university research, specifically research managers and administrators. This thesis reports the findings from a comprehensive national study of this group in Australia, focusing on their profile, aspirations, and experiences in their day to day work. It reports on 194 participants located in centralised research offices in 36 universities.

This chapter presents the case for undertaking the study, and the importance of understanding and directing attention to the role of research managers and administrators (hereafter referred to as RMA). It establishes the investigative parameters of the study and presents the aims and research questions that frame the thesis. The starting point is the recognition that the occupation of RMA is undergoing substantial change and specialisation. These changes reflect the intensification of attention directed to national research agendas plus the increasingly complex nature of the associated performance and regulatory frameworks governing public research funding which RMAs administer. As will be shown, this developing situation is an underlying theme in an emerging body of literature on RMA.

RMA: CONTEXT AND DEFINITIONS

Research Support Staff and the Research Agenda

The 2004 OECD report University Research Management highlighted the growing prominence of national research performance in government agendas in response to the increasing international focus on knowledge generation and productivity (Connell, 2004, p. 5). In universities research activity has moved from being largely the province of the individual researcher to an institutionally managed activity ever more influenced by governmental policy directives and funding mechanisms designed to shape, harness and enhance the production of knowledge. In OECD countries, research in universities is predominantly funded by public monies either through competitive grant mechanisms or performance-based funding schemes,
both of which are subject to intensified assessment, accountability and public scrutiny (Connell, 2004).

Government accountability, performance and legislative frameworks applied to university research activity are administered by RMA. The increasingly complex nature of the ensuing regulatory environment has resulted in RMA staff developing and applying a growing body of specialist knowledge (Allen-Collinson, 2006, 2007, 2009; Green & Langley, 2009; Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009; Langley, 2007, 2012; Langley & Green, 2009; Shelley, 2008, 2010a, 2010b). Similarly, a report for the European Commission (Expert Group, 2008) regarding the implementation of full cost-recovery processes in European university research activity, demonstrated that the level of assessment, scrutiny and accountability applied to research funding and related outcomes will continue to grow. In view of this trend, there is a concomitant demand for, and an increasing reliance on, first-rate university research management and administrative practices in what is fast becoming a complexifying area of university operations (Expert Group, 2008). The authors of the report indicated that they were:

…convinced that the ambition for excellence in research applies equally as strongly to research management…Research management excellence is needed both at a strategic level – doing the right things – and at an operational level – doing things right… (Expert Group, 2008, pp. 8 - 9).

In addition, increasing competitiveness for research funding together with the ‘…heightened prestige of research for universities…’, has been said to have had a ‘dramatic effect’ on the way university research is supported (Shelley, 2010b, p. 59). In turn the effectiveness of RMA work has been linked to national research performance and international research standing (Green & Langley, 2009). Others too posit the importance of non-academic intellectual capital in achieving research excellence (Shelley, 2008, 2010a, 2010b) but also acknowledge that this is unlikely to be recognised by the academics conducting research (Deem, 2010).

Similar themes have appeared in international conference papers about the importance of RMA to institutional research performance and the increasing need for the professionalisation of this occupational group (Kerridge, 2010; Klumpers, 2009; D. McMaster, 2010; Novak, 2009; Puri, 2010; Rutherford, Green, & Langley, 2010; Shelley, 2010a; Sogner, 2009; Weir, 2009). In the main, these perspectives and findings have been presented by directors of research offices or senior research administrators to audiences at annual conferences of RMA-related professional associations and collectively constitute a clarion call from within for the professionalisation of RMA. These presentations are forms of lobbying aimed at increasing recognition, by those
outside the RMA field, of the importance and contribution of RMA to research activity. The aforementioned OECD report draws similar conclusions, recommending that institutions develop the capacity of both academic and administrative staff to effectively manage research (Connell, 2004). Specifically, that institutions pay attention to the construction and design of ‘…emerging research management positions within the institution in such a way as to be able to attract and retain people of quality, experience and vision…’ (Connell, 2004, p. 11).

In Australia, a series of reports commissioned and produced on research and knowledge development culminated in a ten-year reform agenda released by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (hereafter referred to as DIISR)¹ in May 2009 entitled: Powering Ideas: An Innovation Agenda for the 21st Century. The report noted that:

Most public sector research is done by universities. They also do most of the research training in Australia…We depend so much on universities, in fact, that if their performance slips, the whole innovation system suffers (DIISR, 2009, p. 32).

However, the role and contribution of RMA is rarely mentioned explicitly in policy documents about research performance and certainly not in relation to the recent innovation agenda, including the subsequent discussion paper: Meeting Australia’s Research Workforce Needs (DIISR, 2010). Similar observations have been made by the Australasian Research Management Society (hereafter referred to as ARMS) in their submission to the 2010 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation inquiry on Australia’s International Research Collaboration in which they indicated the specific and as yet ‘underestimated’ contributions that research managers and administrators made to their institutions (ARMS Executive, 2010a).

The role and importance of RMA is more acknowledged in some nations than others. In 2004 the Higher Education Funding Council for England (hereafter referred to as HEFCE) commenced funding a small number of investigatory reports into university research management starting with an international benchmarking study conducted through the Association of Commonwealth Universities (hereafter referred to as the ACU) involving 15 Commonwealth universities (Kirkland, Bjarnason, Stackhouse, & Day, 2006; Stackhouse & Day, 2005). A subsequent study jointly funded by HEFCE and the Medical Research Council (hereafter referred to as the MRC) was conducted into the need to professionalise research

¹ From December 2011 DIISR became known as the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE).
management (Green & Langley, 2009). This latter study is returned to in more detail later in the chapter in the subsection entitled: ‘Claims of RMA Professionhood’.

To sum up the above, publicly funded research has become increasingly subject to policy frameworks which are focused on national research priorities, productivity, quality, accountability, research excellence and more recently, measurable impact. Collectively, these factors have led to an operating environment in which increasingly sophisticated forms of research support and RMA role complexity are required. Further, whilst the lack of acknowledgement or recognition of the RMA group is being challenged on a number of fronts, limitations imposed by the relative scarcity of knowledge about this occupational group prevent a more comprehensive understanding of the research dynamic within Higher Education.

In their investigations into university research management structures, Stackhouse and Day (2005) pointed to the various internal and external pressures on universities and other research institutions that led to the development of organisational forms of centralised research management and an increasingly centralised strategic research focus at the institutional level. Of particular note is their finding that: ‘Australia and Canada stood out as having the oldest dedicated research service offices…’ (Stackhouse & Day, 2005, p. 193) of all the universities in the Commonwealth. The primary focus and purpose of this study is to describe the work, contribution and perspectives of university research managers and administrators from the most junior to the most senior, based in Australian centralised research service offices. The research services staff to whom this research was directed typically held responsibilities in: policy development and implementation; research grants administration; higher degree administration and scholarships; ethics and safety clearances; committee administration; or information systems and statistics. A description of the typical organisational structure and operational responsibilities of these centralised offices is provided in Chapter 2.

**RMA Defined**

At the broadest level ‘Research Management’ is defined by Kirkland (2005) as being:

> ...any activity instituted at the level of the institution which seeks to add value to the research activity of staff, without being part of the research process itself… (p. 156).

This description encompasses by definition all aspects of research administration within a university and therefore includes RMA staff located within central research management and administration structures typically known in Australian universities as ‘Research Services’,...
‘Research Office’, ‘Office of Research’ or similar. Other researchers have used the broader term ‘Research Management and Administration’ to describe the same occupational group with some including the descriptor of ‘Management’ to encompass the research manager who is typically on academic contract. Similarly, Hall-Ross (1990) defined research administration as:

…the processes involved in securing and allocating research resources; executing controls; and assuring, through appropriate planning and communication, a supportive environment in which research may occur … (p. 17).

In addition to there being activities specific to research administration such as ‘...contract and grant management and compliance monitoring…’, Hall-Ross noted that tasks similar to those undertaken by other areas of university administration may be: ‘…approached in a different manner in a research environment…’ (1990, p. 17). Analogously, Lawrence (1991) stated that the research administrator: ‘…serves the research effort…allow(ing) the investigator time for creativity while ensuring elasticity of the bureaucratic boundaries…’ (p. 39). In this study, ‘Research Managers and Administrators (RMA)’ has been used to describe the group under examination insofar as it includes all staff supporting research activity at all levels of seniority, excluding those on academic contract. This research has a specific focus on those RMA drawn from centralised research support offices, with the exception of academic members of staff.

Additionally, in view of the different implied meanings that have been given to the terms ‘administration’, ‘administrative staff’ and ‘administrator’ in the literature (Conway, 1998; Szekeres, 2004; Whitchurch, 2012) and in practice, for the purpose of this thesis: ‘administration’ has been used as part of the umbrella descriptor of ‘university administration’ to denote university staff other than those on academic contract. ‘Administrative staff’ has been used when discussing participants’ nomenclature preferences, in particular given that this terminology is currently in use in universities to describe university staff who perform primarily ‘administrative’ as opposed to ‘technical’ tasks; and ‘administrator’ has been used to describe participants who may have technical and/or administrative responsibilities.

Conway (1998) used ‘administrators’ to denote staff other than academics who were involved with ‘…the academic functions of universities, as opposed to those roles associated with organisational maintenance…’ such as cleaners or gardeners (p. 27). This term has been employed in the same manner herein. Further, ‘administrator’ has not been used to distinguish seniority or level of responsibility, nor has it been used to denote academic staff in senior leadership positions. The decision to employ the descriptor ‘administrator’ in the manner
indicated was for ease of use but also to align the nomenclature references within this thesis to that already in use for the RMA occupational group in both the UK and Australia.

Terminological usage in the thesis also reflects the differing nomenclatures employed by other writers in relation to quotations drawn from the literature where appropriate.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Higher Education is a rapidly growing field of study encompassing an expanding number of areas of inquiry. One particular development has been a number of studies reported on university-based RMA. Specifically, there is the body of work from the UK by: Allen-Collinson (2006, 2007, 2009; Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009) on RMA role identity, workplace status and boundaries; another on professionalising English university RMA (Green & Langley, 2009; Langley & Green, 2009); and the recent doctoral research by Shelley (2008, 2010a, 2010b) on the changing nature of English university RMA with particular reference to the UK Research Assessment Exercise (hereafter referred to as the RAE). Most of the work by these researchers was not available at the time this study was designed nonetheless it has informed the interpretation of the data collected for this study. Other literature referred to in this section gave shape to the study’s research parameters of which there are six distinct areas of investigation as featured in the thesis title, namely: Profile; Nomenclature; Professional Alignment; Roles; Workplace Relationships; and Policy Implementation. Each area of inquiry is detailed in the following six sections.

Workforce Profile Data Collected at National Level

To date there is no routine government collection of information about university staff in Australia that specifically identifies research services staff. The information that is collected about the higher education workforce provides details of total number of academic staff (head count and full-time equivalent or FTE), which can be broken down by academic level (for example: professor or senior lecturer), age, gender, discipline, university, length of time in position and academic qualifications. Information on the remaining university staffing groups at the time of study was collected under the heading of ‘Other’ or ‘Non-Academic’ and could be broken down by head count and FTE, age, gender, university, length of time in position and salary level, all of which could be sorted by ‘Academic Support Organisational Units’ within universities. However, that information did not separately identify research services personnel or indeed any other discrete group of university administrators. It also did not provide any information regarding the qualifications of any staff members who were not on academic
contract. This study, therefore, included gaining more detailed information about the profile of Australian university research services staff.

Nomenclature

The nomenclature of staff in university administration has been an area of concern in Australian and UK higher education literature for some time (Conway, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; Dobson, 2000; Dobson & Conway, 2003; Gornall, 1999; Lauwerys, 2002; McInnis, 1998; Pickersgill, Barneveld, & Bearfield, 1998; Szekeres, 2006; Wallace & Marchant, 2011; Whitchurch, 2004, 2006a, 2007a, 2012) and has yet to be fully resolved. University administration has been predominantly depicted in the Higher Education literature and lexicon as ‘Non-Academic’ or ‘Other’, and these are nomenclature forms that have been described as ‘negative marking’ or ‘negative classification’ (Allen-Collinson, 2009). The nomenclature binary of academic and non-academic is perceived as not only unhelpful and indeed demeaning to administrative and technical university staff members, it is increasingly seen as irrelevant in an era in which higher education institutions ‘...are beginning to recognise that a diversifying workforce is creating a more complex set of identities and working practices…’ (Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010, p. 1). The determination of a ‘distinct’ name for an occupation is seen as a necessary step in its development as a profession (Caplow, 1954, as cited in Joyce, 1980). Despite this, in the journey for recognition (Dobson & Conway, 2003; McInnis, 1998; Szekeres, 2004; Whitchurch, 2004) and professional status (Conway, 1998, 2002b, 2003; Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004; D. R. Jones, 1989; Joyce, 1980; Lauwerys, 2002; Topley, 1990; Whitchurch, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2008b; Whitchurch, Skinner, & Lauwerys, 2009), university administration has yet to establish a form of nomenclature that distinguishes it from other occupational groups in an affirmative manner. Moreover, despite nomenclature being flagged as an area of concern in the higher education literature, there is currently no specific empirical work devoted to this topic in evidence. The concerns regarding staffing nomenclature raised in the available literature also point to underlying issues regarding identity and recognition, where university staff who are not employed on academic contract have been described as ‘the forgotten workforce’ or ‘invisible workers’ as discussed in detail in the subsection below entitled: ‘Workplace Relationships’.

Prominent Nomenclature Issues

Several core issues can be defined from the literature. Firstly, there is the issue of staff being defined by what they are not rather than by what they are. For example, most Australian federal government policy documents use the descriptors ‘Non-Academic’ and ‘Other’ to describe university staff other than those on academic contract (Conway, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2002a;
Dobson, 2000; Dobson & Conway, 2003; Gornall, 1999; Pickersgill, et al., 1998; Szekeres, 2004), the terminological effect of which places such staff in a ‘residual category’ (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004). Secondly, as previously mentioned there is confusion over the use of terms to describe staff who are part of a university’s administration and this has been observed by other writers (Conway, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; Gumpert & Posser, 1995; Szekeres, 2004). For example, the use of ‘administrator’ to describe university administrative staff is problematic because such terminology is consistently employed internationally to describe very senior university managers who may or may not be academics, such as: Department Chairpersons; Deans; Registrars; Vice-Chancellors; Directors of Academic and/or Research units; and University Presidents (see for example: Bare, 1986; A. Brown, 1981; Kuo, 2009; Mabokela, 2003; Rolle, Davies, & Banning, 2000; Suspitsina, 2000; Welsh, Petrosko, & Metcalf, 2003). Thirdly, there is the ‘Manager’/‘Administrator’ dichotomy and the associated devaluation of the terms ‘Administrator’ or ‘Administrative’ (Whitchurch, 2007a).

Conway (2000b) defined administrators as ‘...that group of staff who are not employed as academics and whose primary function is management rather than the provision of academic or other professional services...’ (p. 199). However, using the term ‘administrator’ to describe staff with managerial responsibilities can create problems. Conway (2000b) makes mention of this in terms of ‘prestige cringe’, where the term ‘manager’ is preferred or a ‘reverse cringe’ when it is not (p. 200). Over time these terms have become intermingled in practice, which according to Lauwerys (2002) has added to the role ambiguity experienced by staff in university administration. This nomenclature dualism has in part been fed by the increasing specialisation of the group, a process which in turn has resulted in the increasing devaluation of the term ‘administrative’ and/or ‘administrator’ (Wallace & Marchant, 2011).

The move away from the term ‘Administrator’ and its derivatives has been previously commented on by others (Conway, 2000a, 2000b; Lauwerys, 2002; Whitchurch, 2004, 2006a, 2007a) and this nomenclature trend was observed by Professor Malcolm Gillies in his Opening Plenary Address at the 2008 Association of University Administrators (hereafter referred to as AUA) annual conference held in London (Gillies, 2008). In his speech, Gillies (2008), who declared himself a proud administrator, observed the increasing terminological shift to forms of corporate nomenclature within the higher education sector where the ‘Humble old “administration” sounds like an excuse for paper shuffling in the backroom, as compared with the whizz-bang emulation of the corporate world...’ (2008, p. 3).

Gillies (2008) viewed this shift in terminology as being related in part to the professionalisation process, the increasing specialisation of university administration and the need for role clarity.
Such themes appear in Whitchurch’s (2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2009a, 2009b) qualitative work on the changing professional identities in the UK higher education sector, including the emergence of hybrid or ‘multi-professional’ identities and the increasing ‘blurring’ of boundaries between academics and administrators. This work is looked at in greater detail later in this chapter in the subsection entitled: ‘Changes in Administrative Identity’.

The concerns raised in the literature indicated a growing disquiet with staffing terminology for positions in university administration. In this study, part of the research task was to: gauge whether or not staffing terminology was a concern for RMA; gain insight into the Manager/Administrator nomenclature divide; and establish the most and least preferred nomenclature of the group using descriptors in use at the time of study. The main aim, in addition to filling a clear gap in knowledge, was to inform and ideally progress current debates on university staffing nomenclature.

The appropriateness of this area of inquiry and the value of the insight derived from the resultant findings was highlighted following a significant nomenclature shift in the majority of Australian universities (Sebalj, Holbrook, & Bourke, 2012a). This shift, which took place primarily after the study was completed involved the adoption of ‘Professional Staff’ as a replacement for the term ‘General Staff’, the latter of which had been used as a broad descriptor encompassing all university administrative and technical staff. Preference for the term ‘Professional Staff’ had gained momentum since the mid-2000s, spurred on at the time of writing by the declared support of the Community and Public Sector Union (hereafter referred to as the CPSU) for its adoption (White, 2012).

CPSU’s pronounced involvement in the nomenclature change built on early groundwork and ongoing lobbying efforts of the Association for Tertiary Education Management – the Australian professional association for university administrators (hereafter referred to as ATEM) (ATEM Secretariat, 2009), as discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. Given the planned sector-wide replacement of ‘General Staff’ with ‘Professional Staff’ occurred post the study, this thesis contains literature references which predate the change in terminology. In cases where the literature specifically refers to ‘Professional Staff’ then that newer term is used.
Workplace Relationships

Us and Them

To date workplace relationships between academics and administrators have tended to be described in adversarial, oppositional or competitive terms in the higher education literature and surrounding commentary (see for example: Allen-Collinson, 2006; Bassnett, 2005; Conway, 1998; Dobson, 2000; Dobson & Conway, 2003; Gill, 2009; Lewis & Altbach, 1996; McInnis, 1998; Pitman, 2000; Seyd, 2000; Szekeres, 2004; Wohlmuther, 2008) and this has been noted by other researchers (Conway, 1998; Szekeres, 2004, 2006; Whitchurch, 2006b).

The ‘us and them’ rhetoric, which has been used to describe the academic/administrative relationship (Allen-Collinson, 2006; Dobson, 2000; Szekeres, 2004) or the competing bi-cultural viewpoint, is particularly in evidence in literature that appeared from the mid-1990s onwards, which described the effects of corporatisation and managerialism on the university sector and academics. This literature was predominantly informed from an academic perspective. Although academic perspectives were not sought in the current study, an understanding of the rise of managerialism in universities and its impact on academics and by extension the academic/administrator workplace relationship, is an important contextual dimension to any research in this area as demonstrated in the following overview.

Corporatisation and Managerialism in Universities

Changes in the higher education operating environment have led to an unstable academic dynamic that has been brought about by a number of developments including the: impact of mass higher education and the associated complexification of the sector (see for example: Altbach, 1999; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1999; Gordon, 2003; Nixon, 1996; Yelder & Codling, 2004), with ‘…consequent changes in curriculum, teaching and assessment…’ (Nixon, 2010, p. 229); response of governments to address the perceived and actual inefficiencies in the HE sector (Meek & Wood, 1996) resulting in increased governmental demands and information expectations, and leading to progressively complex policy and operating frameworks (Coaldrake & Stedman, 1999; Dixon & Domberger, 1995; Latham, 2001; McInnis, 1998; Whitchurch, 2004); flow-on effects of public sector reform, including market deregulation and market competition and related funding pressures (Meek, 1995); changing conditions of academic work (Meek, 1995; Nixon, 2010); ‘…changing structures of accountability and professional accreditation…’ (Nixon, 2010, p. 229); also, challenges associated with

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2 The use of the label ‘bi-cultural’ to describe the ‘us and them’ academic/administrator dynamic draws on Kuo’s work in which he talks about the two cultural organisations of faculty staff and ‘administrators’. Noting that the latter term is used by Kuo (2009) to encompass senior university post-holders who may or may not have been former faculty members.
information technology and related technological advances (Coidrake & Stedman, 1999) including ongoing revolutions in the distribution of knowledge and modes of communication and the move to virtual as opposed to physical spaces of learning (Duke, 2001; Sharrock, 2004; Wheeler, 2004).

One particularly strong theme which featured in the higher education literature through these and related changes and most noticeably around the turn of the century, was academic concerns about the rise of forms of managerialism/corporatism in universities at the expense of academic collegialism (Dearlove, 1997; Duke, 2001; Gumport, 2000; Kenny, 2008; McWilliam & Taylor, 2002; Mok, 1999; Nixon, 1996; Patience, 2000; Winter, 2009; Winter & Sarros, 2000, 2001). In his critique of such concerns, Sharrock (2004) provided a fairly blunt deconstruction of the existence of a ‘community of scholars’ in terms of the collegial ideal of university life and purpose, against the reality of today’s tertiary institutions and forms of knowledge making. In Sharrock’s view:

Great chunks of the old presumptive iceberg of universal knowledge, embedded in and integrated by an equally presumptive scholarly community, have come adrift while most of us were busy elsewhere… (2004, p. 268).

Sharrock (2004) did not see market-orientated policies as the key determinant underlying the noted state of flux in universities, nor did he accept the complaint against emerging managerialism. His counter argument was that current leadership modes and responses arguably reflected behaviour designed towards ensuring that institutions could ‘…engage successfully with new realities…’ (Sharrock, 2004, p. 273). Sharrock pointed to the short-sightedness of current popular critique, in that proponents of this view do not ‘…pay enough attention to the economic forces and fiscal constraints that practitioners grapple with…’ (2004, p. 272). Others have described this situation as one in which universities are:

…forced to explicitly demonstrate to society that they make efficient and effective use of their resources and that their activities are relevant to the economy and labour market…(Santiago, Carvalho, Amaral, & Meek, 2006, p. 216).

Wheeler (2004, p. 12) wrote that the change debates on pressures being applied to the ‘traditional university’, were a necessary evolutionary step in the discourse about universities, arising from the impact of technological advances, globalisation, competition, economic and social upheavals among other changes. Such factors, according to Wheeler (2004), contributed
to a need to change what he argued as being an outmoded form of education delivery. In relation to this evolutionary change, Kolsaker (2008) in her UK-based mixed methods study into the interaction between managerialism and academic professionalism, indicated that the more negative reactions of academics to managerialism found in earlier literature (such as those described in this subsection) may have been ‘symptomatic’ of the ‘relative newness’ of managerialism to the sector (p. 522).

Drawing on the responses from a focus group of 40 academics, interviews with 12 academics, and a questionnaire involving 707 academics, Kolsaker (2008) concluded that participants appeared to be:

…reasonably comfortable working within managerialist regimes, and that they are instrumental in sustaining them…making sense of and adapting to the changing environment whilst retaining a strong sense of professional identity… (pp. 521 - 522).

Despite such findings, at the time of writing, an allegorical narrative by Richard Hil (2012) about the current workplace experiences of Australian academics indicates that the transitioning of universities to the new corporate reality is still very much a contested process³.

Early in the developing managerialist narrative, Dobson and Conway (2003) posited that changes affecting Higher Education brought about by managerialism may have added to the level of ‘...antagonism between academics and administrators...(as)...administrators became the overt conveyers of corporate management practices...’ (2003, p. 128). At the same time, the authors indicated that these and related changes affecting academics were also having an impact on administrators, although such change effects had not: ‘...been explored with the same vigour...’ as those experienced by academics (Dobson & Conway, 2003, p. 125).

Szekeres (2006), who looked at the effects of corporatisation on general staff in three Australian universities wrote that the corporatising of universities from 1990 onwards occurred ‘…under the influence of the discourse of new public management...’ (p. 135). The underlying assumption of the New Public Management (hereafter described as NPM) policy regime being that if ‘…public organisations were to corporatise – structure themselves and operate more like private corporations – then efficiency would increase...’ (Szekeres, 2006, p. 136). Conversely, those holding an opposing view assumed that affected organisations would become ‘…deeply

³ Post this study there are promising signs of a breakthrough occurring in the literature between the competing discourses of collegiate (scholar) and corporate (manager). For example, Sharrock (2012, p. 336) offers a comprehensive management framework for use as a ‘diagnostic and planning tool’ by university leaders the ideal purpose of which is to connect the ‘manager’ with the ‘scholar’ in practice.
rule bound, over-staffed to enforce all the rules, and highly inefficient as a result…” (Szekeres, 2006, p. 136). This competing discourse Szekeres argued, would have an effect on the ‘…roles, work and language…’ of university administrators (2006, p. 136).

Szekeres’ subsequent research findings involving the interview responses of 37 general staff members, found that participants had experienced an ‘…increase in stress, intensification of work, reduced resources, and increased expectations…’, which were in part as a result of universities corporatising (2006, p. 143). Other corporatising effects included ‘…restructuring, downsizing, commercialisation, functional specialisation, and the increasing use of modern technologies…’ (Szekeres, 2006, p. 143). Critically, she concluded from her research that administrative staff were the ‘instruments’ of university corporatisation and that whilst the ‘…social aspects and the work life of the university changes for them, they also suffer from the consequences of its implementation…’ (Szekeres, 2006, p. 144).

As this brief synopsis indicates, at the commencement of this study academic roles and collegiate traditions were under pressure to adapt to an increasingly corporatising environment. In turn, it has been argued that administrators were perhaps being seen by academics as having gained ascendancy under the new managerialist regime, representing a challenge to the previously hierarchical status quo – a change which appeared unwelcomed in the literature at the time.

**Changes in Administrative Identity**

In the UK, a body of work led by Celia Whitchurch sheds light on what was happening to university administrators through changes in the Higher Education sector particularly those brought about by massification of the student body and increasing government accountability and audit requirements. Whitchurch, a former UK university administrator now academic, undertook a small number of qualitative studies that were published from the mid-2000’s onwards and included findings from her own doctoral research (Whitchurch, 2006a). Her initial work indicated that an ‘identity crisis’ was occurring for university administrative managers and that the binary of academic activity versus ‘an administration’ was being overtaken by more fluid organisational models (Whitchurch, 2004, p. 297).

Subsequent studies involved interviews with middle and senior ranking university managers and administrators firstly from the UK (Whitchurch, 2006a, 2006b), and then more widely with a comparative group drawn from the UK, Australia and the USA (n = 54) (Whitchurch, 2008b, 2008c, 2009b). In drawing on the work of others on the changing nature of universities along
with her own research, Whitchurch, through her ensuing publications, has charted the course of
the evolution of university administration, at least at the more senior levels, from being a very
defined area of university activity, to the present day in which she described the appearance of
‘hybrid multi-professionals’ fostered, in particular, by an ‘emergent project domain’
(Whitchurch, 2006b). The latter concept being devised by Whitchurch to capture the ‘major,
multifunctional projects’, which were seen to be occurring across previously clear-cut
boundaries within the university landscape (2006b, p. 166). She also wrote about the
increasingly fluid and permeable work boundaries of university staff (Whitchurch, 2006a,
2007a), giving rise to an associated need for greater flexibility in university staffing
management practices (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007).

Later work which post-dates the design and data-collection phases of this study and is,
therefore, largely outside the remit of this thesis, included the conceptual development of
emerging categories of professional identity in higher education (Whitchurch, 2008b, 2008c,
2009a, 2009b, 2012). The four categories consisted of the: ‘unbounded professional’ who
‘…displayed a disregard…’ for boundaries within and without the sector (Whitchurch, 2008c,
p. 383); ‘cross-boundary professional’ who crossed over conventional academic and
administrative domains; ‘bounded professional’ who worked within relatively defined roles
(being the more traditional form of staffing identity); and ‘blended professional’ who was
appointed to a position ‘…that spanned both professional and academic domains…’
(Whitchurch, 2008c, p. 384). Given these emergent staffing groups, Whitchurch (2008c)
subsequently pointed to the appearance of a ‘third space’ which existed ‘…between professional
and academic domains, requiring contributions from a range of staff…’ (p. 378), of which
according to Whitchurch the more senior of the RMA staffing group were positioned. Further
in this ‘third space’ Whitchurch found that the:

…concept of administrative service has become reoriented towards one of partnership with
academic colleagues and the multiple constituencies with whom institutions interact…
(2008c, p. 378).

In short, Whitchurch’s developing body of work offers an insight into the shifting role and
identities of university professional staff, particularly for those at the more senior and/or
specialised end of the staffing spectrum. Such understandings provide context to any research
into university administrators and academic/administrator working relationships. Her overall
findings indicate that traditional notions of academics and administrators are under significant

4 These findings drew on Whitchurch’s research study which involved interviews with 24 middle and
senior ranking managers and administrators from three UK universities.
challenge, that the role and organisational positioning of university professional managers and administrators are undergoing considerable change and that the staffing arrangements and associated roles and workplace identities within universities are becoming increasingly complex.

Indeed, the potential extent of this developing narrative can be seen in an article by Brown (2011), who in considering the changing nature of this staffing group (an understanding of which is based largely on Whitchurch’s research as indicated in his article) and possible future scenarios, put forward a ‘new leadership model’ for universities. In this model the most senior of academic positions would be held at the level of PVC Research and PVC Teaching with the overarching university leadership positions being filled by individuals with different (read non-academic) career trajectories and professional specialisations (G. H. Brown, 2011).

Whitchurch’s work brings academic authority to the evolving nature and shifting work identities in universities. The doctoral research reported here was first conceived by the researcher in part to investigate a perceived state of flux in academic and administrative activity – a personal perception drawn from workplace experiences. Moreover, whilst Whitchurch (2008c) has argued that the university administrator/manager, at least at the more senior levels, is professionalising, crossing traditional work boundaries, creating new forms of working knowledge, exercising greater personal agency over their work space and moving from a service to partnership model of interaction with academic staff, it is not clear what if any of these changes are being experienced at the more junior staffing levels.

This study was conducted with the deliberate aim of seeking a broader spectrum of RMA to determine if there were differences at various levels of organisational seniority on a range of issues, including working relationships with academic researchers. Further, similar to Szekeres (2006), this study gathered data from the full range of responsibility levels within research services, from the most junior to the most senior, thereby reducing the potential for elite bias in the study’s design, conduct and resultant findings.

Shifting Workplace Boundaries

A further dimension of consideration in the academic/administrator working relationship dynamic is that workplace identity shifts occurring for administrators are also apparent for the academic profession, which together has given rise to a situation in which according to Henkel:
Workforce identities are no longer defined exclusively in terms of academic identities… (2009, p. 10).

In respect to shifts in academic role identity, Macfarlane (2011) identified the demise of the ‘allrounder’ academic, noting that academic work was now more likely to be broken down into specialisations. He attributed this shift in part to the massification of the sector and high levels of academic casualisation giving rise to the ‘para-academic’ (Macfarlane, 2011). Macfarlane defined the ‘para-academic’ as those ‘…individuals who specialise in one element of academic life…’ (2011, p. 60). Tellingly, Whitchurch (2012) in drawing on 2010 UK higher education statistics indicated that only just over half of the academic staffing group undertake both teaching and research – with these being traditional forms of academic work. Further, almost one-fifth of academics were employed outside the traditional academic framework of associate lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer and professor (Whitchurch, 2012).

The emergence of the para-academic reflects two trends according to Macfarlane (2011) – with the first being the ‘deskilling’ of academics and the second the ‘upskilling’ of administrative and professional staff who are crossing over into traditional academic domains. Bassnett provided insight into the conflicts arising from shifts in traditional academic/administrator roles, given that administrators were increasingly undertaking functions that academics used to do, such as: ‘…professional careers advisory services and student welfare services…admissions…plagiarism detection…’ (2005, p. 101).

Academics, who themselves were experiencing increases in their own administrative load, tended to conclude that administrators must not be carrying their weight or were not being efficient in their work (Bassnett, 2005). Recent fiscal challenges facing UK universities would no doubt exacerbate such conflicts. Funding cuts of about 35 per cent for the period 2011-2015 (Hogan, 2011) would, according to Brown (2011), most likely result in reductions of support staff and lead to an increase in administrative workload for academic staff.

A study commissioned by DEEWR was conducted on the transitional nature of the Australian academic profession. The study, which involved 5,525 Australian academics indicated a sector under considerable stress in which it was found that the level of accountability and associated reporting had become exceedingly onerous and time-consuming (Bexley, James, & Arkoudis, 2011). Subsequently, the researchers recommended the need for better synergies across the

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As a counterpoint to the trend of increasing accountability in academic work a newspaper article published in 2011 by two Australian academics asked that there in turn be a quality framework designed to ‘…promote quality in university administration…’ (Clarke & Frijters, 2011, p. 34).
different information collection activities associated with audit and quality requirements in universities, to reduce the administrative load of providing information which may be duplicated elsewhere and the need for the ‘...development of a new and specialised kind of professional staff...’ to respond to the new demands (Bexley, et al., 2011, p. 53).

The Invisible Workers

Predating Whitchurch’s work, others had also indicated an overdue need for recognition of administrators – their importance, value, contribution and profile (Conway, 2000a, 2000b; Dobson, 2000; Szekeres, 2004). Indeed, ‘general staff’ (an older term encompassing both administrative and technical staff of which RMA form a part) have been described as the ‘forgotten’ workforce (Castleman & Allen, 1995; McLean, 1996) or as the ‘invisible’ workforce within the Australian sector (Conway, 1999, 2000b; Dobson, 2000; Szekeres, 2004).

Castleman and Allen (1995) suggested that the feminised nature of the general staff population (noting that females represented 62 per cent of the general staff population in the mid-1990s – this proportion has since risen slightly (see: Dobson, 2006)) went some way to explaining the ‘lack of visibility’ being experienced by this group. Similarly, Wieneke (1995) described the ‘invisibility’ of female general staff given their predominance in low-level positions – an organisational location which Eveline and Booth (2004) described in later feminist research as the ‘ivory basement’ of universities. Analogously, concerns raised in earlier related research by Wieneke (1991) about the devalued nature of university female administrators are still apparent some 20 years later, as revealed by findings in recent research on female administrative managers (Wallace & Marchant, 2011).

This perceived lack of recognition or ‘invisibility’ is underscored by the relative absence of higher education literature regarding administrative and technical staff, a situation in direct contrast to the vast body of information on academics and academic work both of which: ‘...have been the subject of study of scholars in the field of higher education since at least the early 1970s...’ (Neumann, 1993, p. 33). Regarding the lack of perceived scholarly attention, Wieneke, an early advocate in this area, stated that:

The almost complete absence of research on any general staff group possibly reflects the underlying tension between academic and non-academic staff in higher education institutions and therefore the failure of academics to consider their colleagues on general staff as worthy of study... (1991, p. 55).
Such perception of academic elitism is not new, as in the mid-1970s Balderston (1974, p. 80) wrote:

Faculty and research personnel share a value system and attitudes about academic status that such a value system induces. Administrative staff members, including those at professional and senior levels, cannot share directly in this status system and are, worse yet, sometimes the victims of academic snobbery and contempt for bureaucracy.

However, the elevated status of academics in universities is under threat. In a much cited comparative study, which drew on responses to separate national surveys on work satisfaction and work values involving 1621 academics (lecturer and above) and 653 administrators (HEW Classification Level 8 and above), McInnis found that:

…what we now have is a new level of underlying tension between two groups of ‘professionals’ within universities, with the old (academics) perhaps losing ground in authority and status, and the new (administrators) making strong claims for recognition as legitimate partners in the strategic management of the university… (1998, p. 171).

At the turn of the century Coaldrake and Stedman (1999), in their commentary on what they saw as increasingly blurred lines between the work of academic and general staff, highlighted the lack of presence of general staff (as well as adjunct and part-time academics) in government policy, reviews and ‘institutional strategy’. They wrote that only: ‘...full-time academic staff have usually been considered the essential core of the university…’ and argued that the role of general staff: ‘...cannot be overlooked or isolated if universities are to make best use of the skills of the people who collectively are working to advance the institution...’ (Caldrake & Stedman, 1999, p. 16).

Similarly, over a decade later Jones, Lefoe and Nyland (2012) argued that the Higher Education Sector needed to move away from a hierarchical approach to one of inclusivity and collaboration across staffing groups, in order to ‘...continue to provide leading edge change…’ (p. 74). However, the authors conceded that there were inherent difficulties of ‘cross-functional collaboration’ within universities, noting the historically based ‘…cultural, structural and power differences…’ between academic and ‘professional’ staff (S. Jones, et al., 2012, p. 68) upon which the material contained in this subsection sheds some light.

For university general staff, in particular those who are ‘administrative staff’, the task of proving themselves as an emerging profession in their own right and in terms of receiving
appropriate recognition of their contribution and value to Higher Education is still to be achieved (Dobson & Conway, 2003). Increasing the profile of such staff and their work is arguably a necessary step in the process of addressing the situation of ‘invisibility’ or status as a ‘forgotten workforce’, as evidenced by the lack of widespread recognition of such staff in the Higher Education literature or in any major discourse involving universities and the Higher Education sector (Szekeres, 2004). In response, it must be noted that an underlying aim of this study was very much about raising the profile and visibility of university administrators and their role in and contribution to university activity.

Whilst it can be argued that the underlying ‘invisibility’ of university general staff explains, in part, the paucity of knowledge and information about the RMA subgroup outside of the USA literature, there was nonetheless, a surge of literature as this study was underway (Allen-Collinson, 2006, 2007, 2009; Green & Langley, 2009; Kirkland, 2005, 2008, 2009; Kirkland, et al., 2006; Shelley, 2008, 2010b; Stackhouse & Day, 2005). Indeed, very recently Szekeres (2011) suggested that the term ‘Invisible Workers’ may no longer apply in part because of an increase in literature dedicated to the broader general staffing group. However, Szekeres (2011) concluded that although there had been some gains in terms of visibility made during the period 2004-2009, there remained some deep-seated areas of concern to be resolved within the workplace relating to professional identity, workplace recognition and visibility and workplace relations. Similar issues have been identified for RMA staff as discussed in the next subsection.

**Regulation and Relationship**

Various themes relating to Academic/Administrator workplace relationships are picked up throughout this review. For example, ‘us and them’ and ‘invisibility’ as mentioned previously and in this subsection with specific reference to RMA and ‘boundaries’ later in the subsection entitled: ‘UK RAE and the Effects on RMA’. Moreover, tension in the workplace that arises as a result of the necessary balancing between the facilitation and regulation of research activity by research support staff, streamlining processes, bureaucratic complexity and compliance pressures, have been identified as features of the RMA operating environment (Hansen & Moreland, 2004; Stewart-Cole, 2007).

However, before exploring relationships and what impacts on them further, it is important to note in this context the relatively advanced standing of RMA in the USA over other countries, including Australia and the UK. In the USA, research administration has a history dating back to the 1960s and 1970s (Hansen & Moreland, 2004). Whilst according to Carter and Langley (2009), in the UK RMA had emerged as a separate practice from generalist administration
within higher education in the previous ten to fifteen years. They attributed this to: ‘...the growth in the importance of research and related activities in a university’s portfolio, and the increased levels of legislation, regulation, oversight and exhortation that are associated with the area...’ (Carter & Langley, 2009, p. 31).

The initial appearance of research support staff in the USA has been linked to the emerging national need to support large research projects in WWII (Bushaway, 2007). The Manhattan Project and the ‘high-prestige’ work of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), are cited examples of large-scale research efforts undertaken in America requiring dedicated research support (Bushaway, 2007, p. 171). The associated size, nature and quantum of research being undertaken in the USA would also have had significant bearing on the development of the occupational group of research support, known in America as Research Administrators. For instance, Balderston (1990, p. 43) indicated that in the USA there were ‘...three hundred doctorate-granting universities...’ of which 80 were ‘Research Universities I’. These research universities, according to Balderston (1990) gained most of the federal government funding for basic research and ‘...award most of the doctorates in all scholarly fields...’ (p. 43).

By comparison, Australia’s higher education university system consists of 39 universities in total, of which only part is seen as being research intensive. For instance, the eight ‘sandstone’ universities which make up the Group of Eight (Go8), are the predominant force conducting over 70 per cent of the basic research undertaken in the Australian higher education sector (Gallagher, 2009). This translates into just over 40 per cent of all Australia’s basic research (Gallagher, 2009). In turn, of the more than 170 UK Higher Education institutions, England alone has 86 that have been classified as research intensive universities eligible for funding from HEFCE (Green & Langley, 2009).

In highlighting the various economic, regulatory, political and sectorial changes that have occurred in the USA higher education system over the past three decades Hansen and Moreland (2004) argued that the university research administration group was in a uniquely exposed position, given their responsibility for externally funded research projects, thereby, acting as a ‘...barometer for the university, measuring the degree of social, political, and economic pressure...’ being brought to bear upon the sector (p. 44). Hanson and Moreland (2004) concluded that these same pressures had a negative impact on the original raison d'être of research administration.
In their review of the 1980s USA research administration literature, Hansen and Moreland (2004) identified the original purpose or value of research administration through the writings of others, which they subsequently fashioned into four guiding principles. These four principles, captured in brief in the following, indicate that researcher administrators were to:

…1) reduce the friction and keep the process moving… (in relation to the grants process);
… 2) mediate between the interests of the researcher and the demands of an outside agency; …3) make it possible for researchers to do their work unencumbered by administrative burdens; … 4) have the trust of the faculty and…they should represent the faculty voice when mediating between the interests of the sponsor (granting body) and the university… (Hansen & Moreland, 2004, p. 44).

The authors went on to indicate that it has been increasingly difficult for research administrators to achieve any of these principles in the face of ‘regulatory, economic and political changes…’ affecting university research activity (Hansen & Moreland, 2004, p. 50). This changing reality has been reflected in the associated USA literature from 1990s onwards, with the previously dominant themes of ‘…effective relationships with and services to the faculty…’ being replaced by literature which was focused on regulatory change, management practices, and compliance functions (Hansen & Moreland, 2004, p. 45). They concluded that given the challenges of the increasingly regulatory and complexifying research environment, it was the dual task of RMA to:

….focus forward on the ever-changing environment, adaptive and dynamic, ...never lose sight of the guiding principles of management for research, facilitating research, mediating the process, and supporting the faculty… (2004, p. 51).

Hall-Ross (1990), in her commentary on the challenges inherent in the RMA/Researcher workplace relationship brought about by the complex, regulatory environment surrounding research activity, stated that:

Administrators are often the messengers, monitors and enforcers of regulation; thus, they are the most convenient targets for the ire that researchers may feel compelled to direct at the regulations and regulators… (p. 20).

Along similar lines, an article which appeared almost two decades later, described the challenges facing research support offices in both a UK and an Australian setting, indicating
that there was a ‘…lack of understanding by researchers of the purpose and benefit of research support…’ (Langley & Heinze, 2009, p. 45) given that ‘…the research community perceives research support as inefficient, unresponsive and even a hindrance…’ (p. 37). The authors went on to indicate that part of the solution to improve the described situation was to ‘…demonstrate value (of research support) to researchers versus the ‘policeman’ stereotype…’ (Langley & Heinze, 2009, p. 45). However, it would be naïve to assume that the interaction between perceived academic resentment and/or experienced negative reactions to the compliance focused actions of RMA (or indeed other areas of university administration) are uncomplicated.

In a recent book review, Simon Head (2011) provided a damning assessment of increasing internal and external bureaucratic interference with UK universities. In his review article, Head (2011) mapped the origins of such ‘interference’ to the Thatcher era in the 1980s at which point the ‘state control’ of universities gained momentum being influenced and shaped by concepts and management tools imported from American business schools, with particular emphasis on Kaplan and Norton’s ‘Balanced Scorecard’. Head (2011) identified effects such as the shifting of power from the academy to managers (the definition of which included central university administrations of which RMA would be one subgroup) and the increasing micromanagement of research. Similar themes have appeared in the Australian higher education literature as previously mentioned in this chapter.

For the remaining two themes of ‘us and them’ and ‘invisibility’ that have been apparent for the broader general staff group, an illustrative example pertaining to RMA can be found in a study by Allen-Collinson, which focused on ‘...role identity, status, and work boundaries…’ (2006, p. 270). This study involved a brief survey completed by 77 research administrators and was followed up by interviews with a subgroup of 27 drawn from 19 UK Higher Education institutions. The participants reported a lack of: profile; acknowledgement; and appreciation of their contributions to institutional research endeavours, particularly by academics in the workplace (Allen-Collinson, 2006, 2007). Further, participants reported that their role was invisible to their academic work colleagues ‘…particularly when the job was performed effectively and efficiently…’ (Allen-Collinson, 2006, p. 282).

A further facet of the RMA literature is the call for better workplace relations between researchers and RMA (similar calls for or examples of academic/administrator partnerships and/or collaboration also appear in higher education literature for the broader administrative group (see for example: Conway, 1998; M. McMaster, 2002; Sebalj, Hudson, Ryan, & Wight-Boycott, 2007; Seyd, 2000)). For instance, with regards to the perceived lack of recognition of the work of RMA, it has been argued that an understanding of the shared space or ‘shifting arena’
occupied by both researcher and research manager, particularly with reference to the growing research support capital of RMA, would ‘…enhance the collaborative working of all those involved in research and help maximise research activity…’ (Shelley, 2010b, p. 41). This is set against a context in which the ability of an institution to successfully ‘play the research game’ is becoming an increasingly globalised challenge and one in which the enactment of an ‘alliance’ between academic researchers and RMA is recommended (Deem, 2010).

In turn, Stewart-Cole proposed guidelines to assist in the development of a: ‘…living system of mutual goals and objectives, respect, and cooperation…’ between academic researchers and RMA (2007, p. 27). Added to this was earlier work by Kirkland (2005), who found that ‘effective’ workplace relations between RMA and academic researchers were particularly vital in ensuring academic ‘buy-in’ or support of the work of research offices. He indicated that good working relationships between these two staffing groups were necessary for three key reasons,

… (1) the successful operation of the (research) office depends critically on the flow of information – about the research expertise of staff…emerging and potential projects and…progress of existing work;… (2) the success of the research office in negotiating with outside parties depends largely on their ability to work as a team with academic staff;… (3) the competitive environment…has increasingly placed universities in competition with each other for higher quality research staff… the research management function (having) an important role in recruitment and retention issues… (Kirkland, 2005, p. 161).

The formation of alliances, partnerships and connections between researchers and RMA as recommended in the RMA literature would help to ensure and/or foster constructive workplace relations. In turn, positive workplace relations arguably feature as an attractor by which staff would become connected to their workplace. This latter point is of particular significance given the OECD, in recognising the importance of RMA in the management of research, recommended institutional strategies to ensure the attraction and retention of such staff (Connell, 2004). For Australia, the status or prevalence of academic researcher/RMA alliances is largely unknown, as is whether or not RMA ‘staff friendly’ retention strategies are a feature of Australian universities.

In light of this review, a number of questions arise. What are the workplace relations between research services staff and researchers in Australian universities like? Does this RMA group describe themselves as ‘invisible’ in the workplace and/or their work as being unrecognised by
others? How do research services staff position themselves in the university research landscape? What are the workplace relations like between RMA and other key groups? How does this centralised RMA group describe their typical workplace interaction? Is there any evidence of workplace retention strategies and if so, how satisfied are research services staff with the developmental opportunities made available to them? In addressing these and related questions, this study set out to examine from the perspective of participants the workplace relations and communications between research services staff and academic researchers, research students, and other key external and internal stakeholders.

In addition, an investigation into workplace retention strategies was carried out with inquiry into the developmental opportunities made available in the RMA workplace in relation to promotion and advancement, training and development and access to networking and peer support. This component of inquiry finds endorsement in the observation by Graham (2009), who in commenting on the greying of Australia’s population and university staffing, recommended that universities ensure that early career general staff (of which RMA are a subset) ‘…are retained and their professional development is nurtured…’ (p. 177).

Professionalisation: Context and Status

Context

The study of professions according to Atkinson, Gilleland & Barrett (2007, p. 21), ‘…is a sociological discipline with a varied but interesting history…’. The discipline or ‘sociology of professions’ has undergone a number of phases as described by Collins (1990), commencing with a formative phase during the 1930s to 1950s after which time a ‘…professionalization theory emerged as a topic in its own right…’ (p. 11). This was followed by a ‘classical’ period during which, to paraphrase Collins (1990), explanatory and competing paradigms were developed with research concentrating on ‘…what constituted the difference between professions and ordinary occupations…’ (p. 13). The next phase was the revisionist period of the 1960s and 1970s where professions were ‘…critically scrutinized as part of the structure of privilege…’ (Collins, 1990, p. 13), followed by the transition to the ‘post-revisionist’ period, which according to the author concentrated on ‘historical variation’. This most recent phase is described by Collins as having a thematic absorption with the investigation of the various pathways professions have taken over time and in particular the exploration of the development of like professions across nations (Collins, 1990, p. 15). Emerging from the ‘post-revisionist’ sociology of professions was the concept that ‘All professions do not go through the same pathways, nor do they arrive at the same outcomes…’ (Collins, 1990, p. 15).
This very brief summary of Collins’s work on the development of theory in the domain of professions does not describe the complexities of the various research strands nor the competing paradigms at each of the stated periods. It is merely instructive of the varying developmental phases involved. According to Moore (1970), dual strands of activity continue to challenge traditional notions of what constitutes a profession: firstly, through the activities of emerging occupational groups seeking professional status; and secondly, through the work of academics in this area. In short, the defining and classification of professions is a contested space within which occupational groups continue to come forward to self-identify as emerging professions in a process described as the ‘…democratization of professionalism…’ (Crook, 2008, p. 1).

The occupational groups most successful in professionalising have enjoyed a level of economic security and a collective means by which to gain social status and enhanced earning power (Sullivan, 2000). Increased professional autonomy through the development and control of an area of expertise is also a facet of a well-established profession (Sullivan, 2000). Professional autonomy, enhanced earning power, recognised and valued expertise, increased social status and mobility, are undoubtedly features that have provided incentive and motivation for others to seek the mantle of ‘profession’. The attraction of being part of a ‘community’ as articulated by Goode (1957) may also play a factor, through providing a sense of identity and a body of common values and language.

Notwithstanding the underlying impetus or motivating factors, the (pre)occupation of becoming a profession has: ‘…been a defining characteristic of the past century…’ (Gargan, 1993, p. 1861). A large proportion of the occupational groups seeking recognition as a profession in more recent times have been: ‘…organizational professionals, managers and specialized staff of large organizations…’ (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 71). Continuing this trend, RMA is an occupational group within a bureaucratic setting, which has been agitating for recognition and a transformation of its professional identity (Atkinson, et al., 2007; Cuthbert & Langley, 2010; Green & Langley, 2009; Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009; Langley, 2007, 2012; Langley & Green, 2009; Rutherford, et al., 2010; Shelley, 2010a). Correspondingly, the pressures for the RMA group to professionalise are manifold as shown by Langley and Heinze (2009), who stated that:

The growth in scale, complexity and administrative requirements of research and enterprise endeavours in recent years has meant that organisations and research staff need professional skills and support of research administrations more than ever… (p. 37).
Claims of RMA Professionhood

Kirkland (2008), in his work on the progress of university research management in developing countries, indicated that whilst there were considerable differences in how research management occurred across the world, there were five interconnected drivers behind the increasing focus and growth in this area of university work that had global application. These drivers were: accountability for the utilisation of research fundings and research outputs; increasing competition for research funding and increasing quantum of externally sourced research funding for universities; more ‘project based research’ funding with consequent organisational flow-on effects; a progressively more ‘…complex legal and legislative environment surrounding university research…’; and, the growing demand for quality in research outputs (Kirkland, 2008, p. 719). Kirkland argued that these five drivers have ‘…significantly altered the balance of responsibility between the individual researcher, department and institution…’, leading to the emergence of a new ‘research management profession’ (2008, p. 720), which the author identified in a later article as an emerging ‘global profession’ (2009, p. 35).

However, despite the claim of RMA being a global profession, this occupational group has more recently, at least in the UK, been described as a ‘profession under development’ by Langley (2012, p. 4) who indicated that:

…RMA were part of an unrecognised ‘profession’ in which career pathways, qualifications and scholarship were, at best, under developed.

In making this statement, Langley drew on his earlier research into the need to professionalise UK RMA. This research involved 51 senior RMA from the research offices of 20 English universities and depicted a group with mixed occupational backgrounds, qualifications and training (Green & Langley, 2009). Operationally, Green and Langley (2009) reported three broadly different Research Office models (although the authors indicated these did not capture all the organisational variations found) with various reporting structures and sizes, the latter ranging from under 10 to over 100 research office staff. They found there was a tendency for universities with larger research quantum to have more highly devolved research support structures, although all universities in the study maintained some form of a centralised research office (Green & Langley, 2009). The ‘organic’ nature of the development of this functional area of universities meant that there was a lack of consistent approach, operation and accountabilities with ongoing structural change occurring (Green & Langley, 2009).
In addition, research support was revealed to be a poorly delineated area with no defined career path or common job roles or responsibilities across the sector (Green & Langley, 2009). They identified an occupational group which had yet to establish a common identity, purpose, function and operation, with a ‘haphazard range’ of relevant training and development offered by various providers (Green & Langley, 2009). Nonetheless, they also found a ‘…significant demand and appetite for a professional research management framework, although the nature of this framework was less obvious…’ (Green & Langley, 2009, p. 22).

For Australia, there has been a shift towards the professionalisation of research management and administration as evidenced by the creation of the professional association – the Australasian Research Management Society (hereafter referred to as ARMS) in 1999. According to the first President, ARMS is an organisation:

…dedicated to the professional development of research managers and administrators, the promotion of the profession of research management and the enhancement of the research enterprise… (Dibb-Smith, 2007, p. 1).

The ARMS is a professional association in its infancy that has been hampered in its further development by a lack of base funding and an over-reliance on the volunteer efforts of busy people (Hochman & Hill, 2008). Despite such challenges and following the results of a report into the professional training needs of its constituents, ARMS has developed the building blocks of a formal professional development curriculum including the establishment of an ARMS Competency Framework as part of its 2020 Strategic Plan (ARMS Executive, 2011). The ARMS also delivers a growing range of education and training programs through the auspices of its annual conferences and state chapters. The ARMS has the intention to position itself in time as the ‘…“peak body” of the profession…’ with a phased plan to grow all aspects of its activities, including ‘…member support, networking, professional development and advocacy…’ (ARMS Executive, 2011, p. 8). The association is also a foundational member of the International Network of Research Management Societies (hereafter referred to as INORMS) – further detail about which is provided later in this subsection.

Older associations which exist in both the UK and the USA are at different stages of development, with RMA from those countries operating with a number of salient differences and similarities to those in Australia, particularly in terms of how the progress of their occupation’s professionalisation is fostered and supported. The following comparisons between
the RMA professional associations of the UK and the USA provide international context to this area of the current investigation.

**RMA Professional Associations – UK and USA**

**UK**

At the beginning of 2012, ARMA had approximately 1,700 members drawn from universities, funding bodies and other research institutions (ARMA, 2012) which is a larger body than its Australian equivalent but much smaller than its American counterparts. The ARMA has been in operation since 1991 and delivers a suite of introductory courses, hosts annual conferences for RMA practitioners, and like ARMS, is a founding member of INORMS. In Green and Langley’s (2009) aforementioned research, there was a mixed participant response to the work of ARMA ranging from comments such as that the association provides excellent introductory courses for junior staff and is a good vehicle for networking between RMA across the sector, to the expressed concern that it is too *ad hoc* in nature with ‘…no master plan or coherence to the training programme…’ and indeed may lack the ‘…capacity to run an accredited training institute…’ (Green & Langley, 2009, p. 20). Notwithstanding these findings, there is now evidence of substantial progress towards a professional development framework by ARMA (Langley, 2012).

More broadly, the professionalisation movement of administrative staff in UK universities appears to be gaining profile and traction through the creation of a continuous professional development (hereafter referred to as CPD) framework for professional services staff in the UK Higher Education sector (AUA, 2009; Whitchurch, et al., 2009). The impetus for the creation of the national common CPD framework was attributed in part to an expected 25,000 increase in professional and support staff over the next several years in the UK higher education sector (AUA, 2009). However, as previously mentioned the ongoing effects of the 2009 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) on the UK economy (plus more recent economic instability in the region) very likely had an impact on such growth, given the multi-million pounds worth of government funding cuts announced from the budgets of British Universities (Bongiorno, 2010).

A conclusion that can be drawn from the development of the CPD framework and current UK HE literature and associated government reports (see for example: *The Higher Education Workforce Framework 2010* (HEFCE, 2010)), is that the professionalisation movement of UK university administration is being supported from the ‘top-down’ or ‘from above’ (Evetts, 2003), thereby, providing a level of momentum. Such government funded support is not evident as forthcoming in the Australian context.
USA

The professional development of USA research administrators has been supported and fostered by two predominant professional associations, namely, the Society of Research Administrators International (hereafter referred to as SRA International), which currently has 4,000 members (five per cent of whom are international members located outside the USA) (SRA International, 2012) and the National Council of University Research Administrators (hereafter referred to as NCURA), with over 7,000 members (SRA International, 2009b). According to personal communication from Chris Daniels, Executive Director of SRA International, in 2009 around 40 per cent of the SRA International members were also members of the NCURA, indicating a level of cross membership (Daniels, 2009). The membership of these two bodies were drawn from an estimated population of up to 100,000 self-identified (university and non-university) research administrators within the USA (Allen-Collinson, 2009).

The SRA International, which started in 1967 (originally as the Society for Research Administrators (SRA)), was founded by four business managers at Yale University as a way to share ideas and solutions to problems faced by research support administration (Myers, 2007). The resultant formalised association developed over time to meet the needs of its growing membership for networking and professional development opportunities, with a focus on increasing the ‘…status of research administrators…’ (Myers, 2007, p. 20). In July 1969 the first edition of the Journal of the Society of Research Administrators (now The Journal of Research Administration) was published by SRA, being the ‘…first broad-based scholarly periodical for research administrators…’ (Beasley, 1988, as cited in Myers, 2007, p. 20).

The association’s expansion during the 1990s to become an international organisation (during which time the SRA became known as the SRA International in 1998-1999), heralded a broadening of reach leading to the creation of INORMS (Myers, 2007). The INORMS formed in 2001 holding its first international conference in Australia in 2006 (Myers, 2007), which has ‘…enabled transfer of good practice in training and development of those involved in RMA through its member societies…’ (Carter & Langley, 2009, p. 31). The INORMS at the time of writing consisted of nine sister societies around the world, as well as the ACU and PraxisUnico – a UK technology and knowledge transfer company (INORMS, 2012).

The second and older USA association, the NCURA, was founded in 1959 with a membership of research administrators drawn from American colleges and universities. The NCURA has

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*It was at the 2006 INORMS inaugural conference that this current study was officially launched by the researcher with an award winning poster entitled: The Profile, Role and Contribution of Research Services Staff and Their Perspectives on Managing Change in Australian Universities (see Appendix A).*
developed and presented stand-alone fundamental training programs for research administrators since the mid-1980s, with a more advanced program added in 2002 (T. J. Roberts, Sanders, & Sharp, 2008). The NCURA also has its own peer-reviewed scholarly publication, namely, the *Research Management Review Journal* which started in 1987. Both the SRA International and the NCURA have jointly defined an outline of the Essential Elements of Research Administration (SRA International, 2009a), plus the SRA International has a code of ethics (SRA International, 2009a) whilst the NCURA has an equivalent statement of principles (NCURA, 2009). There is also a shared comprehensive body of knowledge about the practice of research administration in the USA to which both associations refer.

Further to the adoption of a code of ethics by RMA professional associations, there is also the notion of educating, promoting and fostering an ethical stance within research administrators as a necessary component of furthering the professionalisation of this group (Gabriele, 2002). More importantly, this ethical stance is seen as essential for research administrators to perform their role in “…protecting and stewarding the hopes of those who invest in research…” (Gabriele, 2002, p. 23). Indeed, Krauser when commenting upon the protective role research administrators perform on behalf of researchers and institutions, stated simply that: ‘The costs of non-compliance are great…” (2003, p. 14).

In addition, the USA has an accrediting body for research administrators called the Research Administrators Certification Council (hereafter referred to as RACC), which was established in 1993 by the then SRA (CRA, 2006, p. 1). RACC was formed in 1993 by the SRA as an independent non-profit organisation consisting of:

…active certified research administrators whose role is to certify that an individual, through experience and testing, has the fundamental knowledge necessary to be a professional research or sponsored programs administrator (CRA, 2006, p. 1).

According to personal communication from Judy Campbell, Executive Director of RACC in 2009, as at July 2009 there were 1,234 Certified Research Administrators in the US, 88 per cent of whom worked within a university at the time of undertaking the certification exam (J. Campbell, 2009). This concentration of university research administrators was emphasised by the finding that over half of the certified research administrators were members of the NCURA as opposed to 28 per cent being members of the SRA International (noting some were members of both associations) (J. Campbell, 2009). The Executive Director went on to say that the results of an internal survey in 2008 found that most of the research administrators sought the CRA credential because of professional pride, whilst some found it helpful to obtain
employment or increased professional opportunities and in some instances salary increases (J. Campbell, 2009).

Drawing on the work of Emile Durkheim, Katz (1969, p. 71), in his work on the professional status of nurses in the late 1960s, stated that: ‘...the legitimacy of professional guardianship of a body of knowledge depends on not only having a distinct body of knowledge, but on acceptance of the guardianship by those beyond as well as those within the ranks’. Translated into this context, for the RMA occupational group to fully realise its own professionalisation, academics and other university stakeholders would need to recognise the legitimacy of RMA as a profession. Coming from a similar understanding regarding the need for external and scholarly recognition of the developing RMA profession, Atkinson, Gilleland and Barrett (2007) undertook a critical review of 20th century literature on the sociology of professions, with a view to establishing a working theoretical model situating ‘…research administration in the overall study of professions…’ (p. 55).

The authors proposed placing research administration within the realm of a ‘public service profession’, as part of their deliberate strategy to create: ‘…an important theoretical stronghold…’ for the ongoing study and recognition of this group (Atkinson, et al., 2007, p. 55). This work was seen as an important corollary to the activities of the SRA International, in particular, by providing a scholarly framework for the professionalisation process in the USA to take a further evolutionary leap. Such thinking is in accordance with Jones (1989, p. 59), who stated that: ‘Advanced education and scholarly activity in a field are both a cause and an evidence of professionalization…’. Engagement with the academic process to assist in the further development and wider recognition of the developing profession in the USA was thought to be essential (Atkinson, et al., 2007).

A concrete example of the advanced progress towards the codification and systematization of knowledge in the field of USA research administration is encapsulated in the publication of the university level text Research Administration and Management (2006). The book reviews referred to it as a ‘…coming-of-age milestone for the profession of research administration…’ and an essential reference resource of research administrators (Shambrook & Cooper, 2006, p. 57). That being said, many research managers and administrators in the USA are not members of a professional body, and there is evidence (Hansen & Moreland, 2004; Stewart-Cole, 2007) they face the same challenges in recognition as those experienced by counterparts overseas.
Developing an Australian Perspective

Having been informed by this literature review and international comparison, it is clear that a professionalisation process is underway for RMA and it would appear that the RMA-related sister professional associations of the UK and Australia are playing ‘catch-up’ with their USA counterparts in terms of the surrounding professionalising framework. However, what is not known from this review is to what degree individuals within this occupational group ‘align’ with a profession (a concept hereafter referred to as ‘Professional Alignment’). That is, do they describe themselves as being members of a profession? What do they think their profession is? What are their professional characteristics? Are they members of a professional association? Do they think others see them as being members of a profession? Do they undertake professional development activities and if so what are they?

In order to shed light in this area this research study was designed to elicit an Australian perspective with its inquiry into a range of RMA professional characteristics, including: membership of professional associations; level of professional development and perspectives on accreditation; the degree to which participants saw themselves as being members of a profession (hereafter referred to as ‘Professional Self-Concept’) and if so, to what intensity; how they describe their profession; their perceptions of stakeholder recognition (hereafter referred to as ‘Professional Stakeholder-Regard’); and lastly, the decision-making capacity or ‘authority’ of this group.

Regarding the latter element of inquiry, ‘authority’ is a particularly contentious facet in achieving acknowledged professional status as shown, for example, in the higher education literature on challenges to traditional academic authority (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2005; Winter, 2009; Winter & Sarros, 2000), academic and professional self-identity (Henkel, 2002; Nixon, 1996) and changes to academic work (Marginson, 2000). This area of inquiry was broached in the study via two questions. The first of these was on the decision-making capacity of the participant group and, the second, on the typical characteristics of that decision making. Hockey and Allen-Collinson, in their aforementioned research study on UK RMA, queried the ability for the RMA occupational group to reach professional status given the:

… focus on control as one of the central criteria of professional status; research administrators’ routine struggles to achieve some form of control over their labour process would suggest that professional status remains problematic… (2009, p.156).

This study does not seek to investigate the merits or otherwise of any claims regarding the professional status of RMA or to make judgement as to the level of professionalism. Indeed,
Gornitzka and Larsen (2004) warned against treading unknowingly into the arena of what constitutes a profession or that of being a professional, pointing to the long and hotly debated disciplinary conceptualisation of such terms. This study does seek to gain a sense of how developments are playing out at a time when there is literature and documentary evidence to indicate that there is a process underway.

This area of investigation takes its cue in part from Teichler (2003), who wrote almost a decade ago of the ‘silent revolution’ of the professionalisation of university staff other than those on academic contract or at the most senior levels of the university and the need for research in this area in order to inform future debates as they arose. Teichler said at the time that higher education researchers needed to take heed of this staffing change, as the ‘…rise of the professionals might have more salient impact on knowledge of the higher education system, deliberation and decision making than most actors tend to believe today…’ (2003, p. 183). This study is well placed to advance knowledge in this small but growing area of import in higher education research.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Dobson and Conway (2003) wrote almost a decade ago in their commentary on poor relationships between academic and general staff, that:

> For administrators to be able to formally claim their position in the division of labour in universities they will need to clarify the knowledge base, skills and expertise they bring to university management and, perhaps most importantly, to define how their work contributes to the teaching and research that is the core business of universities. Without such an assessment, we risk an incomplete understanding of how universities operate and continuing confusion about who has the most appropriate skills, knowledge and abilities to govern and manage… (p. 131).

Others have similarly commented on the lack of detailed information regarding the roles of university administrators (McInnis, 1998; Whitchurch, 2004), not to mention the ‘invisibility’ of this group’s work and contribution as previously described in this chapter. Such understandings have given rise to the fundamental design of this project in terms of the broad-based questions underpinning it – particularly with regards to building a comprehensive picture of RMA roles, responsibilities and ultimately, contribution to university research activity.
The development of an understanding of the functions and responsibilities of central research administration forms a key building block in measuring RMA organisational contribution to an institution’s research cycle. Such knowledge acts as an essential framework against which the performance and accountabilities of individual research support staff can be explored. It is information foundational to the establishment of a body of knowledge for university research support staff and the wider RMA body in Australia – the development of which has been identified as a necessary step in the ongoing professionalisation of this occupational group (ARMS Executive, 2010b).

This study sets out to determine how research services staff in Australia perceived their roles and responsibilities and what they feel is expected of them in terms of their individual performance and accountabilities. The aim is to elicit insights into: the typical working week of participants; what they strive most to achieve in their work; and what of their responsibilities they find the most and least difficult to accomplish and what has changed.

**Policy Implementation**

At the time this study was devised, university researchers and administrators in Australia were about to experience a new research assessment exercise that emphasised quality and impact of research, which would affect both working environment and funding. It is well known now that this development – the Australian Research Quality Framework (hereafter referred to as the RQF) – was abolished in December 2007 (Carr, 2007) and the research assessment idea was re-worked to become the Excellence for Research in Australia (hereafter referred to as the ERA) (ARC, 2010).

The advent of the RQF provided a shared context in which to ask – to what extent is policy implementation and administration part of the RMA role, or how much do they expect it to be? Such basic questions have not been approached in the literature, although there can be no doubt that policy is very much guiding research activity in all its manifestations in the university. This researcher also sought the opportunity to explore how RMA were preparing for RQF implementation one year out from its planned nation-wide enactment.

Contextual background to this area of research inquiry is provided in three forms – the first is an overview of the higher education policy setting at time of study, during which the sector was preparing for the RQF’s planned implementation. The second introduces the RQF and highlights key debates arising in the sector following its announcement as background to the study’s findings. Third, Shelley’s (2008, 2010a, 2010b) study into the effects of the UK’s RQF
equivalent, the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), on the work of English university RMA is described. This is preceded by a brief overview of the RAE.

**Australian Higher Education: Policy Setting**

Between 1996-2007 the Liberal/National Party Coalition was in federal government, during which time the Higher Education ‘Crossroads’ reforms were announced (Nelson, 2002). These reforms brought about significant shifts in federal government policy and were part of what was called the ‘Nelson revolution’ (see Marginson, 2005c), named after the Federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson. The reforms continued under the stewardship of the next Minister Julie Bishop. The data-collection phase of this research took place during Bishop’s ministry.

Higher education reform under Dr Nelson was a marked departure from the policy setting which had arisen during the previous administration (Marginson, 2005c). The preceding era commenced in the mid-1980s under Dr John Dawkins, during which time he introduced the ‘Australian Unified National System of higher education’, where Colleges of Advanced Education were merged with Universities (Duke, 2000, p. 7), the ramifications of which extended into the 21st century (G. Davis, 2004). The unitary system of Higher Education held an expectation that all universities were ‘comprehensive universities’ bolstered by increasing investment in research (Marginson, 2005b). In turn, the ‘Nelson era’ was characterised by a fundamental shift away from a ‘one-size-fits-all’ expectation of universities, moving the sector with funding shapers and policy levers designed to increase diversity and competition (Marginson, 2005b). Such a shift can be seen in statements attributed to the University of Melbourne’s VC, Professor Glyn Davis who, when discussing new strategic plans of his university, indicated that they were:

> ...predicated on an assumption that the Australian higher education system is going to become a lot more diverse… (t)here’ll be a lot more players than there are now and there will be many different types of universities... (Davis, 2005, as cited in Macnamara, 2005, p. 35).

The RQF was a major government policy initiative planned under Dr Nelson and slated for execution by Ms Bishop, just prior to the government-changing federal election held towards the end of 2007. The RQF represented a significant policy shift in the treatment of publicly funded research and at the time was expected to deliver marked changes in university research funding, leading to an increase in sector diversity the end result of which possibly included some universities becoming teaching-only institutions.
**Australian Research Quality Framework**

**Introduction**

The RQF was described as: ‘...a new system to measure the quality and impact of publicly funded research...’ (Illing, 2005b, p. 25), with the potential to completely change the face of publicly funded research in Australia, not to mention its potential impact on the Higher Education Sector (Duckett, 2005; Illing, 2005a, 2005c; Marginson, 2005a; O'Keefe, 2005). Indeed, it had been argued at the time that the RQF itself would become ‘...the defining frame rather than the research it is designed to measure...’ (Cheek, 2006, p. 117). It had also been described as a ‘live experiment’ of how best to measure the impact or returns on publicly funded national research investment to the taxpayer (Donovan, 2008). During its development phase in 2006 and 2007, Australian universities were preparing for the RQF on the assumption that it was to take effect in 2008. The Federal Government’s stated aims of the RQF\(^7\) were to:

> ...be transparent to government and taxpayers so that they are better informed about the results and benefits of the public investment in research; ensure that all institutions are encouraged to focus on the quality and relevance of their research; and inform future research funding distribution… (G. Roberts, 2005, pp. 7 - 8).

Formalised research assessment processes such as the RQF, proposed for Australian universities and other major Australian research bodies, were part of a global trend as evidenced for example by the advent of: the National Evaluation System for Publicly Funded Research in the Netherlands; the German Research Foundation Funding Ranking; the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) (now called the Research Excellence Framework) in the UK and in Hong Kong, and the Performance Based Research Funding (PBRF) model in NZ (DEST, 2005).

**Sector Responses to RQF Development**

The proposed introduction of the RQF elicited a range of responses from the sector, the most noticeable of which were the oppositional reactions. For example, Millicent Poole wrote an opinion piece in her role as Vice-Chancellor of Edith Cowan University and convener of the New Generation Universities Group (NGU), about how NGUs were not represented in the RQF expert advisory group. Her argument was that NGUs should not be ‘penalised’ by the RQF for their ‘traditional emphasis on teaching’ (Poole, 2005, p. 36) (of note the NGU was subsequently disbanded in 2007 (Australian Education Network, 2011) during the development phase of the RQF). Whilst in contrast to the stated NGU defensive position, ANU Vice-Chancellor

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\(^7\) The groundwork for building the case for the need for the RQF was established via a series of ministerial releases and government reports as listed in the chronology provided in the RQF Policy Development Timeline (see Chapter 8).
Professor Ian Chubb when pointing to what he saw as ‘fundamental flaws’ in the RQF design, indicated that the RQF should be a policy device designed to ensure that research monies and student places be directed to the ‘most active research universities’ (Illing & Armitage, 2006a, p. 21).

A particular casualty of the competing viewpoints exemplified above can be seen in the demise of the former peak body of Australian universities, the Australian Vice Chancellor’s Committee (AVCC) (PhillipsKPA Pty Ltd, 2006) and the establishment of its successor ‘Universities Australia’ (Universities Australia, 2011). This was a significant sector development undoubtedly hastened by the fractures opened up between the university groups as a result of the debates around the RQF (Marginson, 2005a). In particular, a discussion paper which proposed how ‘research impact’ would be measured (*The Research Quality Framework: Assessing the Quality and Impact of Research in Australia. Research Impact* (DEST, 2006a)), was seen as a divisive issue responsible for widening the gap between the top eight research (known as the ‘Group of Eight’) universities and the rest of the sector (Gallagher, 2006; Illing, 2006a).

As an indication of the work and investment involved with the RQF, in June 2006, the AVCC was quoted as saying administrative preparatory costs would be as much as $50 million, with some universities concentrating on building their research capabilities and others their research staff and activities (Illing & Armitage, 2006b). In a separate article the innovation and research spokesman, Kim Carr, in announcing that a Labor government would scrap the RQF, was quoted as saying that the University of Melbourne had spent $10 million in preparing for the RQF indicating similar costs in other universities (Healy, 2007). At an operational level, newspaper articles during the RQF development phase reported examples of universities moving to categorise academic staff into ‘research-active/intensive’ and ‘non-research active/intensive’ staff (Macnamara, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2007; Moodie, 2005) reflecting earlier UK experience (Tapper & Salter, 2004).

Trevor Gale (2005, pp. 6-7), in his 2005 AARE Presidential Address, critiqued the ‘discourse of cooperation’ of higher education institutions in relation to the development of the RQF, referring to the lack of academic engagement and seeming exclusion from ‘contexts of influence’ in relation to higher education research policy specifically and education policy generally. In a similar vein, Quann-Youlden (2006, p. 2), in her doctoral thesis on the impacts of government policies on autonomy and research in Australian universities, made it clear that in relation to higher education policy development generally and with specific reference to the
RQF, the ‘…Commonwealth was willing to listen to universities so long as the conversations are within the government parameters and meet government objectives…’, including timelines. In August 2007 there was a request by universities for more time to prepare for the RQF, and even though finalised policy details and the submission date were not yet available, Bishop held firm on the 2008 roll-out date. At that stage, the sector was facing a massive demand for data and had argued time was needed to put in place and test appropriate IT systems, representing multimillion-dollar investments, designed to comply with the new policy (O'Keefe, 2007).

The development phase for the RQF extended over two-and-a-half years from the initial announcement in May 2004 (Howard, 2004), to the full policy release in September 2007 (DEST, 2007a, 2007b). What was apparent from the online material available on university websites was that there were differences in strategies and preparatory approaches to the RQF (this is returned to in Chapter 8).

**UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)**

At the time it had become clear from the UK’s RAE experience that formalised research assessment processes could deliver radical shifts in research funding between institutions (Bourke, 1997; Harman, 2000). A review of the UK’s RAE literature indicated that research assessment exercises had the potential to fundamentally affect the way research was conducted (Harley, 2002; Harman, 2000), particularly when it came to the use of bibliometric evidence to ascertain research performance (Steele, 2004), and with the potential for marked demarcation shifts between teaching and research (Bourke, 1997; Harley, 2002).

The reputational standing of the university, individual academic research reputations, variability in impacts on disciplines (Bernard, 2000), plus the increasing level of expectation regarding research significance and impact (Harley, 2002), featured in the literature and commentary of the period. Allowing for policy differentials between the UK’s RAE and its Australian equivalent, the import of the implementation and conduct of the RQF was potentially a very high stakes situation for Australian universities and their staff.

The RAE despite its well documented flaws (Bernard, 2000; Guena & Martin, 2003; Hare, 2003; Harley, 2002; Johnston, 2005; 2006; McNay, 1998, 2003; Redden, 2008; Steadman & Hillier, 2002), was according to Taylor (2003, pp. 97-98), a successful ‘policy tool’ in delivering: effective concentration and selectivity of research funds; institutional strategies and internal funding formulas shaped by RAE assessments; and, increased research outputs and improvements in international research standings (as evidenced through citation research). Although the terms of RAE ‘success’ have been argued to have been too narrowly defined, as
‘…the negative, unintended consequences of the behavioral change that it cause(d)…’ were not taken into account (Redden, 2008, p. 2). Therefore, despite the abolition of the RAE announced in 2006\(^8\) (HM Treasury, 2006; C. Johnston, 2006), it provided a model for delivering outcomes that it could be said the Australian federal government was seeking through its RQF policy instrument. In support of its choice as a policy template, an international report on research assessment practices at the time found that the UK RAE had engendered widespread interest across a number of countries and that it had ‘…become a “benchmark” for research evaluation of higher education…’ (Tunzelmann & Mbula, 2003, p. 6).

**UK RAE and the Effects on RMA**

The UK’s RAE policy mechanism had wide-ranging effects on the UK higher education landscape. Shelley (2008, 2010a, 2010b) highlighted the impacts of the RAE specifically on the work of English RMA and most particularly on the interface between the academic researcher and RMA (hereafter referred to as the researcher/RMA interface). The central thesis of Shelley’s (2008) multimethod research involving documentary analysis, a survey of 120 RMA and interviews with a subgroup of participants plus some academic researchers drawn from 22 English universities, was that the dual impact of the RAE and audit culture had changed the face of English RMA:

> Whilst the RAE is only one measure of research, it is the policy that most consistently affects both funding and status and hence establishes, arguably, a self-perpetuating cycle of investment and success. The importance given to the RAE both by the sector and academics is intertwined with the demands of accountability. This, I argue, played a major part in increasing the management of the research process (p. 33).

Shelley reports that the 1992 RAE consisted of ‘…counts of staff, outputs, research students, and the numbers and values of grants…’ (2008, p. 28). This situation changed with the 1996 RAE in which peer review and assessment panels came into play and continued for the exercises in 2001 and 2008 (Shelley, 2008). The issue of research quality became a factor. The resultant increased focus on ‘…audit and accountability in relation to research…’ Shelley argued, ‘…played a major part in the need for the change in the status and roles of RMAs…’ (2008, p. 28). Further, as RMA were the policy disseminators and gatekeepers of the RAE policy implementation and ongoing compliance, ‘…any unease or unrest academics felt was to

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\(^8\) The RAE was subsequently replaced by the Research Excellence Framework (REF) for application in 2014 (HEFCE, 2007).
some extent associated with the RMAs who were charged with implementing the process…”  
(Shelley, 2008, p. 35).

The move into research collaborative projects fostered by the RAE framework also brought added complexity to the RMA role, given the need for ‘…combining different pricing strategies of research projects, mediating different management practices and harmonizing different cultural work practices…”  
(Shelley, 2008, p. 38). One of the major contributions of Shelley’s research was to highlight the ‘shifting arena’ occurring at the researcher/RMA interface:

  Throughout the sector the value of research and the associated value of research management increased. More academics acknowledged the added value RMA work gave to research and RMAs experienced how their roles changed in response to this increased focus. One way of understanding this is that the RMAs and the academics were becoming more acquainted with the nature of research and research income as itself a form of capital valued by institutions and the sector. They were gaining a sense of the game and their habitus was becoming attuned to the stakes. The fields of RMA and academics crossed into each other, both shared the same highly prized research capital but via a different game (2008, p. 210).

Shelley’s study revealed the impact of the RAE on RMA in English universities, thereby pointing to the potential for the RQF (or its replacement – the ERA) to affect the work practices, roles and professional identities of Australian RMA over time, with implications for the researcher/RMA interface. Her findings, published too late to be taken into account in the design or conduct of the current research study, not only confirmed the appropriateness of investigating how participants engaged with the RQF but also provided material which allowed comparison of participant profile and demographic characteristics between the two studies. Shelley’s research findings further provide a framework for follow-up research for the ERA.

It is evident from the above discussion that one of the most important events in research policy setting in the mid-2000s was the introduction of research assessment in Australia in the form of the RQF, and that this was a strong focus for universities. This was a major change and provided the opportunity to illustrate how RMAs perceived both change and their involvement with new policy in general and this policy in particular. Specifically the group’s: initial reactions to the announcement of the RQF; conceptions of implications of the new policy setting; involvement with preparations for the RQF; plus perspectives on the future effects of the RQF on their university, on the higher education sector, on academic researchers and the work of research support staff.
RESEARCH STUDY: AIMS AND KEY QUESTIONS

As observed in this chapter, the primary weakness in the higher education literature is essentially that academics have not seen university general staff as a topic or sub-field of importance to university activity and that this continues despite the growth of studies of university management/operations. The same paucity of academic attention has been paid towards RMA and related research support activities. Outside of the USA, most of what is known about university research comes through the perspectives of academic researchers. This one-sided perspective is being challenged with a small but increasing number of research projects, ensuing articles and conference presentations which focus on university RMA, which have emerged, in particular, from the UK.

Research Management (and Administration) has been called a growing global profession (Kirkland, 2009). In addition, the OECD has indicated the importance of RMA participation in the achievement of university (and by extension national) research performance targets, recommending that the training and retention of RMA staff be seen as an organisational priority (Connell, 2004). In Australia, where university research performance is seen as vital to the country’s knowledge economy (DIISR, 2010), RMA and their work are currently unknown elements of the equation. It is a gap that needs attention. Hence this study’s aims were to:

1. Attend to the invisibility of the work, profile and operational environment of RMA based in centralised research service offices in Australia.

2. Capture and reflect the voice and perspectives of this group, describing their roles and contributions to the higher education sector.

The key questions emerging from this review are:

- **What is the profile of Research Service personnel in Australian Universities and how do they perceive and interpret their roles and responsibilities?**
- **What are their perspectives on staffing nomenclature, do they view themselves as being a profession and what are their professional characteristics?**
- **What are the dynamics of their working relationships and how do they locate themselves within the operating environment?**
- **How are they involved with major policy implementation – specifically in preparations for the introduction of the Australian Research Quality Framework?**
The next chapter describes how these questions were addressed. It explains the research methodology of the study and compositional profile of the study’s participants.
CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

As indicated in the previous chapter, this study seeks to determine the profile, characteristics and dynamics of the working lives of research services staff in Australia; their perspectives on profession and how they make sense of their roles and activities within universities, especially in the context of a rapidly changing policy landscape.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the approach, specify how the research was conducted and provide some initial detail on the participant group. The first section elaborates on the research sub-questions. The second presents the rationale for the research methodology incorporating the research design. The third expands on the ‘design elements’, research phases, sampling method, the target population and participants. The fourth section specifies instrument design, the method of data interpretation and analyses used. Ethical considerations are presented in the fifth section, with the last section providing an overview of the research challenges and limitations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the previous chapter four guiding questions were identified:

*What is the profile of Research Service personnel in Australian Universities and how do they perceive and interpret their roles and responsibilities?* (Profile, Roles, Responsibilities and Accountabilities)

*What are their perspectives on staffing nomenclature, do they view themselves as being a profession and what are their professional characteristics?* (Nomenclature issues, Professional Alignment)

*What are the dynamics of their working relationships and how do they locate themselves within the operating environment?* (Working Relationships)

*How are they involved with major policy implementation – specifically in preparations for the introduction of the Australian Research Quality Framework?* (Policy Implementation)

These core questions encompass key features that are detailed at the centre of Figure 2.1 and include: profile; roles; responsibilities and accountabilities; nomenclature issues; professional alignment; working relationships in context; and policy implementation. The Figure provides a
schematic representation of the framework of questions addressed in the study and their interconnectedness.

In addition to the overarching core questions, there are four further components to consider that contribute to a holistic and integrated picture. These components generate a further four subsets of questions.

The first of these components is **context**, which includes questions about the:

- nature of the university sector – the major drivers; and
- changes occurring in Higher Education that directly impact on the work of Research Services. At the time of the study this included obtaining a more in-depth understanding of the RQF and what its implementation involved for research services personnel.

Some of this background has already been presented in the first chapter, but the main purpose in the design was to elicit how RMA perceive the situation and how they made sense of it for their own work and careers. There are also contextual factors at the institutional and workplace level, including what shapes the day-to-day work of RMA.

In Figure 2.1, contextual components are picked up in the first column.

The second component is **demographic**. Given the relative scarcity of data collection about RMA, a number of questions were needed to address basic demographic characteristics such as:

- gender and age, campus location, and university membership grouping;
- qualifications, salary levels, duration of employment, employment background, reasons for choice, and career trajectory;
- scope and range of duties for different groups of personnel; and
- organisational structure, including reporting lines, decision-making process, level of input, and staffing structures.

In Figure 2.1, demographic components are picked up in the second half of the second column.

The third component is **interactional**, (see the right-hand column in Figure 2.1) and primarily relates to the relationships that occur and are necessary for work to be completed. There are three lenses employed here. One of these is **working relationships**:
• with each other,
• academic staff,
• research students, other sections of the university, and
• other stakeholders.

Another is personal satisfaction with, and expectations about, roles, including:

• role expectations and performance accountabilities,;
• level of workplace participant in decision-making, and
• training, professional development and opportunities for promotion.

Thirdly, there are areas of interest relating to their increasing professionalisation, specifically their nomenclature preferences and degree of professional alignment. Specific foci include:

• staffing nomenclature,
• professional characteristics,
• professional self-concept, and
• professional stakeholder-regard.

The fourth and final component is connective. The questions are primarily concerned with connections between all of the above elements and capture, at least broadly speaking, the operating dynamic and culture of the workplace. In Figure 2.1, connective components are shown in the form of annotated arrows placed between each of the boxes.

One of the key assumptions underpinning the study is that profile matters. In other words depending on gender, age, what job an RMA does, where they are positioned and their level, will help to explain some of their responses to the other areas identified above. Certainly gender has been identified in this way in the literature. So it follows in the research design that many analyses address the question: ‘Does the response differ on the basis of demographic characteristics?’
**CONTEXTUAL COMPONENTS**

**Higher Education Sector**
- What are the characteristics of the Higher Education Sector in Australia and what are its major drivers?
- What is the nature of the research environment in Australian Higher Education institutions?

**Research Services**
- What are the specific operations of research services sections or their equivalents?
- What are the levels of responsibilities held by staff in research services, their functions and performance and accountability frameworks?

**Research Quality Framework**
- What are the aims of the policy?
- How did the sector respond?
- How was it implemented and who was involved?

---

**STUDY OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH SERVICES STAFF**

**CONTEXTUAL COMPONENTS**

**Higher Education Sector**
- What are the characteristics of the Higher Education Sector in Australia and what are its major drivers?
- What is the nature of the research environment in Australian Higher Education institutions?

**Research Services**
- What are the specific operations of research services sections or their equivalents?
- What are the levels of responsibilities held by staff in research services, their functions and performance and accountability frameworks?

**Research Quality Framework**
- What are the aims of the policy?
- How did the sector respond?
- How was it implemented and who was involved?

---

**INTERACTIONAL COMPONENTS**

**Working Relationships**
- What are participants’ working relations like:
  - With each other?
  - With academic staff?
  - With research students?
  - With other sections of the university?
  - With groups external to the university?

**Personal Satisfaction with and Expectations of Role**
- What are participants’:
  - Role expectations and accountabilities?
  - Level of decision-making authority?
  - Access to training and professional development activities?
  - Opportunities for promotion?

**Professional Alignment**
- What are participants’:
  - Staffing nomenclature preferences?
  - Professional characteristics and understandings?

---

**OVERARCHING AREAS OF INQUIRY**
1. Profile
2. Nomenclature Issues
3. Professional Alignment
4. Roles, Responsibilities and Accountabilities
5. Working Relationships
6. Policy Implementation (Responsibilities and Perceptions)

---

**WORKPLACE CHARACTERISTICS AND CULTURE**

**INFLUENCES AND PRACTICES**

**EXPECTATIONS, OPPORTUNITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

**LEVEL OF PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION**

**RANGE OF VIEWPOINTS AND CORRELATION**

---

**DEMOGRAPHIC COMPONENTS**

**PERCEPTIONS OF POLICY CHANGE SIGNIFICANCE**

**STAFFING PROFILE**
- What are participants’:
  - Demographic characteristics?
  - Career paths?
- What are the scope and range of duties of different groupings of officers?
- What are the surrounding staffing structures?

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**Figure 2.1 Research Questions Schematic**
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY – MIXED METHODS

To answer the questions detailed in the previous section, this study needed to collect base-line demographic and other data about RMA as a group, as well as seek in-depth perspectives and insights from them about their work and their experiences. Across almost every dimension both the questions and the overall aims (see Chapter 1) require both qualitative and quantitative data collection, necessitating a mixed methods approach spanning the study’s design, analysis, and reporting phases (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007, p. 129), in their definition of mixed methods (informed by an analysis of many studies), report that Mixed Methods provides ‘…an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research…’ that offers a ‘…powerful third paradigm choice…’. In addition the paradigm

...offers an important approach for generating important research questions and providing warranted answers to those questions. This type of research should be used when the nexus of contingencies in a situation in relation to one’s research question(s), suggests that mixed methods research is likely to provide superior research findings and outcomes (Johnson, et al., 2007, p. 129).

The combination of qualitative and quantitative data in a relatively large-scale study such as this, also supports generalisability of the research findings to the wider population (Hesse-Biber, 2010), thereby increasing the study’s potential contribution. Hansen and Moreland (2004, p. 44), in their study of research undertaken in the USA, indicated that university research administrators were a ‘…barometer for the university, measuring the degree of social, political, and economic pressure…’ being brought to bear upon the sector. That is, whatever is found to be occurring for the RMA participants in this study, similar issues are likely to be occurring for university administration more broadly.

The intensive and singular focus on RMA in the study signposts that university administration and the subgroups within it, constitute subjects of interest in their own right within the field of higher education. Given the apparent marginalisation or ‘invisibility’ of university administrators in the broader higher education discourse, the work of St.Pierre and Roulston (2006) supports this emphasis. They commented on the role qualitative inquiry has played in rendering visible marginalised groups and that it has ‘…long carried on its strong, supple back the epistemologies of the Other…’ (St.Pierre. & Roulston, 2006, p. 678).
The present study can be described as a ‘qualitative dominant’ mixed-methods research study (Johnson, et al., 2007, p. 124). While many individual items in the questionnaire are quantitative and descriptive, the core questions are predominantly qualitative in orientation, hence the whole tends toward the interpretative paradigm as becomes evident when the findings are synthesized in the final chapter.

The undertaking of a relatively large-scale mixed-methods research study was seen by the researcher as a necessary and timely corrective to the Australian and UK higher education literature regarding university administrators. The literature that was available at the start of the study (mid to late 2005) consisted mostly of opinion, reviews and commentary pieces and was acknowledged as such by later researchers (see for example: Bassnett, 2005; Conway, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; Dobson & Conway, 2003; Gornall, 1999; Lauwerys, 2002; Whitchurch, 2004). There were few larger scale empirical studies at the time. A notable exception was McInnis’ (1998) national survey on work roles, satisfaction and values involving 653 university administrators, which was a follow-up study to an earlier survey of academic staff. That McInnis’ study attracted high citation rates, clearly pointed to the potential of studies of ‘scope’ to make an important contribution. There was also a small but vigorous body of qualitative work by feminist researchers about female university general staff (see for example: Castleman & Allen, 1995; McLean, 1996; Wieneke, 1991; Wieneke, 1995) and what can be described as foundational work by Dobson (2000), Gornitzka and Larsen (2004), Szekeres (2004), Volkwein and Zhou (2003) and Whitchurch (2004), that revealed the potential of more in-depth approaches.

The limitations or ‘shortfalls’ of existing research included: a single-site only (Berman & Pitman, 2010; Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004; Graham, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Pitman, 2000); a relatively small-scale, predominantly qualitative, project being essentially ‘one-off’ in nature (Allen-Collinson, 2006, 2007, 2009; Green & Langley, 2009; Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009; Langley & Green, 2009; M. McMaster, 2002; Szekeres, 2004, 2006; Whitchurch, 2008c); and/or they were focused only on the more senior professional staff, thereby being potentially subject to forms of ‘elite bias’ (McInnis, 1998; Whitchurch, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2009b). Consequently, by conducting a mixed-method study that is national in scope and involving the full spectrum of research services staff at all levels of responsibility across the entire Australian higher education sector, the researcher hoped that these identified limitations would be largely avoided.

The study that emerged to most closely resemble this one in approach and focus is by Shelley (2008, 2010b), involving 120 English university RMA. It too employed a mixed-method
approach involving a quantitative survey instrument, qualitative interviews and documentary analysis. In Shelley’s published work there is no clear indication of the ‘mixing’ between the qualitative and quantitative elements, whereas integration is central to this study. Open ended survey questions feature largely in this study. By contrast, Shelley’s questionnaire consisted of mostly closed categorical questions and a number of attitudinal scales. In addition, Shelley interviewed a small number of academic researchers in her study, whereas the focus here is RMA alone.

Creswell (2003, p. 217) identified a typical mixed-method research design as a ‘concurrent triangulation strategy’, where researchers ‘...attempt to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within a single study...’. It was, therefore, envisaged at the outset of this study that the methodology would address any actual or perceived shortfalls of any singular method employed and so ‘...result in well-validated and substantiated findings...’ (Creswell, 2003, p. 217).

Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989), in their mixed-methods conceptual framework, also indicated four other purposes for mixed-methods research, namely: ‘Complementarity’, ‘Development’, ‘Initiation’ and ‘Expansion’. In this study, in addition to ‘triangulation intent’ (as reflected in the decision to use differing methods of data collection), a further purpose is ‘Complementarity’ where:

…qualitative and quantitative methods are used to measure overlapping but also different facets of a phenomenon, yielding an enriched, elaborated understanding of that phenomenon (Greene, et al., 1989, p. 258).

This intent can be found, for example, where participants were first asked a range of qualitative (open-ended) and quantitative (categorical/Likert scale) questions via a questionnaire in a specific subject area and from a number of different angles. The same subject areas are then revisited via a series of ‘overlapping’ interview items. The purpose in this study was to gain a multi-aspect perspective ideally leading to enriched and substantive findings. In Appendix B, there is a matrix provided that demonstrates complementarity across questions and sources of data.

All research instrumentation (with the exception of one interview item which was added to the study at a later stage as will be discussed in Chapter 8) was created at the same time (as opposed to sequential instrumentation development, which is dependent on earlier stage outcomes or findings). This decision to have a fixed, rather than emergent design (the latter being an indicator of ‘Development’ intent in mixed methods research (Greene, et al., 1989)), points to an overarching pragmatic approach to the design and conduct of what was proving to be a large
and complex endeavour. Pragmatism is strongly identified with mixed-methods research (Bryman, 2006; Feitzer, 2010; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Moreover, the exploratory aspect, often a reason for emergent design, was already determined by significant gaps in the literature.

The fourth purpose for mixed-methods research – ‘Initiation’ has been defined as being where the researcher:

…seeks the discovery of paradox and contradiction, new perspectives of frameworks, the recasting of questions or results from one method with questions or results from the other method (Greene, et al., 1989, p. 259).

This was not a specific aim of the study, but what became interesting in the data analyses was how the quantitative data shed light on the qualitative data and vice versa, including paradoxical findings. For example, as will be discussed in depth in Chapter 9, a number of quantitatively generated research results highlighted the gendered nature of research services staff on a range of measures but gendered issues for the most part did not figure in the findings derived by qualitative analyses. Conversely, when the qualitative data were analysed, it was only evident after quantitatively derived participant profile or staffing characteristics were overlaid on this material that clear thematic patterns were rendered visible in the responses.

The fifth and last purpose for conducting mixed-methods studies has been identified as ‘Expansion’ according to Greene, et al. (1989). This is where the researcher ‘…seeks to extend the breadth and range of inquiry…’ (Greene, et al., 1989, p. 259) and is a goal of this particular study. Greene, et al. (1989) found in their review of 70 mixed-methods research studies that ‘Complementarity’ and then ‘Expansion’, as defined by the authors, tend to be the primary purposes given for this form of research. The same two primary purposes, alongside ‘Triangulation’, are evident in this study’s design.

ELEMENTS OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Data collection consisted of an online anonymous questionnaire of 67 items (some multi-part) designed to take less than 30 minutes to complete and two 30-45 minute telephone interviews. Questionnaire participants could choose, or not choose, to also participate in one or both interviews. The remaining data collection phase involved analysis of publicly available documents such as government policy documentation, information on university internet websites, professional association websites and ongoing literature review and synthesis.
Research Validity

Good research is about being aware of what you are doing, why you are doing it and how you are going about it, including the conduct of research from an ethically aware standpoint. Authors such as Maxwell (1992), Wolcott (1990), and Eisenhart and Howe (1992) emphasize in qualitative research that the researcher engages in an ongoing mindful process of considering, challenging, and testing validity from the outset, through to the ongoing implications of the research undertaken.

Credibility of the research design and, in particular, credibility of the research techniques employed, are crucial considerations. Rubin and Rubin (1995) asked, ‘…why should anyone believe what you (the researcher) say or write?’ and ‘...why should you (the researcher) accept what your conversational partners have told you?’ (p. 85). According to the authors, such questions can be addressed in qualitative research through the: ‘...transparency, consistency-coherence, and communicability...’ of design and of the research processes involved (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 85). To that end, this study employed techniques that included: maintenance of accurate and complete records; audit trails of methods/decisions/processes; documented researcher reflections of major doctoral turning points; and retention of original tape recordings of all interviews. Practices such as those adopted are recognised ways to provide transparency of the researcher’s approach, progress and findings (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In turn, transparency enhances the reliability of the research undertaken given that the reader is then able to follow the researcher’s steps in a detailed and comprehensive manner (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995).

Consistency, according to Rubin and Rubin (1995), can be provided through actual and reported following up of ‘contradictory responses’, for example, as part of the comprehensive reporting of emerging themes. Investigation of the ‘consistency of individuals’ and ‘consistency across cases’ in instances where, for example, an interviewee contradicts themselves in any of the planned interviews and/or when there are conflicting findings on the same phenomena across interviewees, will also assist in the building of consistency in the research (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, pp. 87-91). ‘Coherence of themes’ also plays a part in demonstrating credibility where the researcher is able to: ‘...offer explanations for why apparent contradictions in the themes occurred and what the contradictions mean...’ (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 87). In some cases the researcher needs to provide potentially conflicting information to highlight the complexity, richness and variability of responses (Wolcott, 1990). In this study’s presentation of findings, the outlier responses were consistently reported as were those where a consensus in perspectives
was apparent, with subsequent conclusions and theoretical models built on the resulting spectrum of participant perceptions.

The final component of ‘communicability’ under this heading can be demonstrated through the following examples: an informant ‘seeing’ themselves within the research report (although not necessarily agreeing with everything said); verbatim reporting in first person; other researchers recognising, understanding and accepting what is written because it ‘...complements what they and others have seen...’; plus the researcher’s communicated confidence and avid, detailed description providing a convincing picture of the researched phenomena (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 91). Credibility is established in this study with the aid of: member checking of the interview transcriptions; ongoing contemporary document analysis; literature review and synthesis; and through feedback from the conference presentations (Sebalj, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011; Sebalj & Holbrook, 2006, 2010; Sebalj, Holbrook, & Bourke, 2012b) and journal articles (Sebalj & Holbrook, 2009; Sebalj, et al., 2012a) produced from this study, all of which were subject to peer review.

Given the importance of participant voice in the credibility of this study, every opportunity was taken to locate and gather participant perspectives and to optimise ‘voice’ in presenting the findings, not least because the researcher desired that the findings would act as a catalyst to open up the field, challenge academic dominance on the topic of higher education, and increase the recognition of the contribution of RMA (and by extension the wider body of university administration) to the operation and performance of universities. This latter is consonant with ‘transformational’ validity, defined by Cho and Trent (2006, pp. 321 - 322) as ‘...progressive, emancipatory process leading towards social change that is to be achieved by the research endeavour itself’.

**Target Population**

An examination of the structure and organisational placement of research service offices in all of the 37 Australian public universities involved in this study was undertaken by the researcher to inform the research design. However, the University of Newcastle was excluded from the study, given the researcher’s potential to identify individual participants. This involved collecting detail about centralised research support from university websites in 2005, with a follow-up conducted in 2006. The collection revealed a central research support office in all cases. According to Langley (2012), this level of uniformity is not duplicated in the UK, but a central research office appears in at least a majority of UK universities.
The structure of Australian central research offices varied at the detailed level, primarily in relation to organisational placement and senior management reporting lines. Size and complexity of the university, the quantum of research activity being undertaken and the size of the research student body was reflected in the organisational design. At the time of participant recruitment, offices ranged from a simple single office structure with five staff, to a large department with separate arms consisting of at least 50 staff in total.

There was also variation in the extent to which Higher Degree Research (HDR) administration was conducted from within the research office or under a separate unit such as a graduate school and in the degree of devolution of responsibility for research management and administration activities between the central research offices and research centres, faculties, individual researchers and, in two universities, the Registrarial secretariat. It was Langley (2012, p. 1), who stated when writing about UK university research support, that ‘…it is important to recognise that not all support emanates from a central office…’. The same stipulation applies in the Australian context. For example, this centralised group would not necessarily include those staff who are known by terms such as research facilitators, research development officers or business development managers, given they are more likely to be based within the faculty, in separate business development units or similar (Marlin, 2009). On a related note, research commercialisation activities have also been shown to be managed and organised differently across Australian universities (Harman & Harman, 2004).

According to the information available on university websites, staff who are located within central research offices (hereafter referred to as ‘Research Services’) typically:

- provide support for the research initiatives, activities and output of academic researchers;
- undertake Higher Degree Research student administration including the administration of student grants, scholarships and sponsorships, plus aspects of research student welfare and support services;
- provide an interface between universities and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (hereafter referred to as DEEWR\(^9\)) in terms of compliance with legislative requirements and associated policy implementation processes;

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\(^9\) DEEWR was known as the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) during the data collection phase of this study. The Tertiary Education component of DEEWR’s portfolio was subsequently transferred to the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) in December 2011.
• they liaise with government bodies and other external funding bodies on behalf of their universities in relation to the processing of funding applications and grant reporting;
• provide grant administration;
• ensure academic and administrative compliance with a range of legislative, regulatory and procedural processes and policies;
• provide funds management, external and internal; and
• provide executive support to associated committees including all aspects of research ethics administration and related legislative compliance.

The more senior in this group would be involved in setting, directing and/or informing university research policy directions and research strategies, plus coordinating external and internal reviews of university research performance and assessment.

Knowledge of this information guided the development of the instruments and the analysis and interpretation of responses.

Drawing on the research services staff contact lists, 640 research services staff were initially identified as the potential target population.

Given the aims of this study, the decision was to access a range of participants of differing ages, gender, experience, seniority, career profiles, and campus locations to obtain a sufficient number of participants across a broad range of characteristics, to achieve a level of representation from which to generate ‘analytical significance’ (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 54).

The Participants

All 640 identified research services staff members were sent an invitational email, which provided a hotlink to the online anonymous questionnaire. The email also issued an invitation to participate in either one or both telephone interviews via a separate process. The participant could proceed to the interview stage by emailing their consent to participate directly to the researcher. There was no identifiable link between the questionnaire and interview process.

The response rate on the questionnaire was conservatively estimated at approximately 30 per cent and it was expected that between 20 and 30 research services staff would accept the invitation to participate in either one or both interviews. The latter had up to six months from the original receipt of the invitation to participate. The online questionnaire website was accessible for any potential participant from September to the beginning of December 2006. Three follow-up emails were sent to each of the initial potential participants. These were
blanket emails, given the researchers had no way of knowing who had and who had not completed a questionnaire. Telephone contact was made with consenting interview participants to confirm the time of the interview.

Potential participants were approached or advised about the study in three ways: a) by direct email advising them of the study via their email address drawn from their respective university website (note: the email address list was suppressed in the email header); b) through related conference presentations and forums (ARMS, ATEM, AARE) at which the researcher alerted potential participants to the study; and c) via promotional information provided in ATEM and ARMS newsletters.

Nulty (2008) wrote on the adequacy of online (and paper based) survey response rates. He indicated that online surveys typically achieved much lower response rates than paper-based surveys of around 33 as opposed to 56 per cent. In retrospect, this finding supports the reasonableness of the original response target.

Some methods used to increase participation in the study included broad ranging communication; ease of access to the questionnaire via the emailed hotlink (an approach referred to as ‘push the survey’ (Zuniga, 2004, as cited in Nulty, 2008, p. 304)); the online nature of the survey; and providing a three-month window for participation. With respect to the latter, extending the survey duration is said to increase participation (Quinn, 2002, as cited in Nulty, 2008, p. 305). Nulty (2008) found anonymity was a prime concern of survey participants and also that the shorter the time to completion the more likelihood of participation (Quinn, 2002, as cited in Nulty, 2008, p. 305). So anonymity and keeping the questionnaire to a manageable length were also strategies used to maximize response rate.

On the last point, despite keeping it as short as possible, it may be that the length of the questionnaire (particularly given its design of primarily compulsory questions) may have contributed to a lower response rate than might have otherwise been obtained. Of the 342 potential participants who opened the questionnaire, 269 commenced but only 194 (including two participants by hard copy in the week the online survey was closed) went on to complete it. A further contributing factor could have been misunderstanding caused by the instructions, which set out how participants could start the questionnaire and finish it at a later time using a self-generated password. A small number of emails received by the researcher and by the Survey Manager administrator revealed some participants could not re-access their partially completed survey. Given the anonymous nature of the questionnaire, neither the Survey
Manager administrator nor the researcher could provide access to the partially completed survey so the participant was asked to start the questionnaire again. This situation undoubtedly led to some dropouts. Conversely, the comprehensive detail provided in the questionnaire responses, particularly given the high number of full-set responses, has rewarded the approach taken in regard to the questionnaire design.

At the close of the online survey, 194 eligible completed questionnaires were received, achieving the targeted 30 per cent response rate of the total identified population. The representativeness of the participant group is considered in detail in Chapter 3, where a full demographic and profile description of the study’s questionnaire participants is given, with the exception of their ‘staffing subgroup’ profile, a term developed within this project, and their ‘university group’ profile, as described in the next two subsections.

**Participant Profile by Staffing Subgroup Compared to Target Population**

Questionnaire participants were asked to describe their current position title (Q5) and to provide a brief role description (Q31). As shown in Table 2.2, eight separate streams of activity or staffing subgroups were identified, providing a compositional profile of participants according to their primary function. This information was then compared to the corresponding functional titles of the wider target population of research services staff, by drawing on the originally compiled staff contact information used to establish the study’s target population. The table contents are ordered from highest to lowest numbers of participant staffing subgroups.

The largest group of participants reported primary functions in Grants and/or Finance Administration (27 percent), the next largest staffing subgroup was in the area of Graduate Studies and/or HDR Student Administration (19 percent), closely followed by those with primary functions in Information Technology and Research Data Management (16 percent). The balance of participants was spread over the five remaining subgroups listed. The overall ‘function’ profile of the participant group proved very similar to that of the overall target population, with more than 60 percent of participants holding primary role responsibilities in Grants and/or Finance Administration, Graduate Studies and/or Higher Degree Research Student Administration, or Research Data Management (including Information Technology/Systems dedicated to research activities).
Table 2.2 Participants ($n = 194$) as a Proportion of the Target Population ($n = 640$) by Staff Function

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAFF FUNCTION</th>
<th>Participant Group</th>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Participant Proportion of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>$n$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. RMA (Grants/Finance)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. RMA (Data/IT Systems)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. RMA (Ethics)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Deputy Director/Director</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. RMA (General/Operational/Planning)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. RMA (Contracts/External Relations/Research Development)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. RMA (Policy/Quality/RQF/Projects)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>640</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $^a$ As this total will vary according to the number of valid responses received for each question posed in the study, any variations to the total participant numbers will be indicated where appropriate.

However, there were three subgroups that were either over or under-represented. First, the staffing subgroup of RMA (Ethics) (16 percent of population versus 11 percent of participant pool) was somewhat under-represented. It is argued that ethics administrators may not have seen the RQF as having a direct impact on their area of work and, given the stated context of the study, there was perhaps less interest and, therefore, a lower uptake of the questionnaire from this staffing subgroup (this assumption is supported by the separately-reported questionnaire and interview responses of ethics managers and administrators in this study, to questions relating to the RQF as discussed in Chapter 8).

Second, there is a slight over-representation in the sample of research services staff with a functional role in IT/Data Systems (14 percent of population versus 16 percent of participant pool). A possible explanation here is that the online format of the questionnaire made it more attractive for this staffing subgroup to complete, given its electronic mode of delivery.

Lastly, over half of the identified population of Deputy Directors/Directors was included in the study, providing a level of over-representation from this staffing subgroup (6 percent of population versus 10 percent of participant pool). It is assumed that this heightened attention in
the form of higher response rates reflects a strategic interest in the developing area of research administration, an assumption that finds support in the research responses of this staffing subgroup as reported in Chapters 4 and 5 in particular.

**Participant Profile by University Group**

During the study’s design phase, there were five categories in common use at the time into which most Australian Universities could be clustered in terms of their history, location, organisational structure, research intensity levels and strategic alliances. The categories or ‘university groupings’ (exclusive of private universities) were:

1. Group of Eight (Go8) – also known as ‘Sandstone’ Universities
2. Innovative Research Universities (IRU)
3. Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN)
4. New Generation Universities (NGU) – also known as ‘Post 1987’ Universities
5. Regional Universities (REG)

Marginson (2005c) categorised each individual university into one of the five groupings (noting that this terminology was also used by DEET, ARC and the AVCC at the time) with the exception of the University of Tasmania, which he described as being an ‘Aspirant Research University’ (a category which included all IRU and some REG universities) and the Swinburne University of Technology, which he described as a ‘post 1987 university’ (a category which included all NGU and some REG universities).

Ideally, there would be representation from each of these five groupings providing a mix of multi-campus versus single campus universities, regional versus urban universities, a range of size, research capacity and current research quantum, plus varying positions in terms of overall university research performance rankings. Participants were asked to indicate to which of the five university groupings they belonged (Q51) or to otherwise indicate they were either ‘Not Sure’ or to specify a different grouping (‘Other’). It was from these responses that any data analyses involving university groupings was subsequently drawn, given that there was no identifying material in the questionnaire regarding a participant’s university. The 188 valid responses to the questionnaire item on university groupings shown in Table 2.3 are ordered from highest to lowest numbers of participants.
Table 2.3 Participants \((n = 188)\) by University Grouping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIVERSITY GROUP</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>% of total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go8</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATN</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRU</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGU</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REG</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure/Other</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate that there was a broad mix. The dominant participant subgroup is Go8 (research-intensive universities), which reflects the greater number of research services staff identified in this group in the target population.

*Interview Participants*

In the second phase of the study, two series of focused, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 37 self-nominated participants, resulting in a total of 71 telephone interviews (with three interviewees exercising their choice to be interviewed once only). As the questionnaire was anonymous, there was no link between the questionnaire and interview data, therefore, demographic questions were asked of each interviewee with the results presented in Table 2.4.

As shown, those interviewed form a gendered representative sample of the overall participant pool and were drawn from 21 of a possible 36 universities, with representation from each of the five university groupings and of the eight staffing subgroups. Just under half of the questionnaire participants who were identified as being part of the ‘Deputy Director/Director’ staffing subgroup went on to be interviewed, with an otherwise good representative spread of the remaining staffing subgroups. The average length of time the interviewees were employed in their current roles was four years; in Research Services in total seven and a half years and in universities in total almost twelve years. This indicates an interview pool with longer than average length of experience of working in Research Services, compared to the 64 per cent of total participants who have worked in research services for five or fewer years (as discussed in depth in Chapter 3).
Table 2.4 Demographic and Descriptive Profile of Interviewees ($n = 37$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of different universities involved</th>
<th>21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 (73 per cent) were female and 10 (27 per cent) were male (versus 77 per cent female; 23 per cent male in total participant group).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakdown of Participant University Groupings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go8 = 7 (13), IRU = 2 (6), REG = 4 (4), NGU = 5 (6), ATN = 5 (10) (see Note$^{10}$).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Current Position</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Total = 150.61 years, Mean = 4.07 years, Median = 3.5 years, Shortest = 0.1 year, Longest = 20 years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Research Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Total = 278.67 years, Mean = 7.53 years, Median = 6.5 years, Shortest = 0.5 years, Longest = 20 years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Universities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Total = 438.5 years, Mean = 11.85 years, Median = 11 years, Shortest = 1.5 years, Longest = 20+years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Highest Qualifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 x Masters, 8 x PhDs, 8 x Bachelor Degree, 3 x Professional level qualifications (that is: chartered accountant/lawyer/vet), 3 x Graduate Diploma, 2 x MBA, 2 x Honours, 1 x Graduate Certificate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakdown of Participant Staffing Subgroups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 x Deputy Directors/Directors, 9 x RMA (Grants/Finance), 4 x RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students), 4 x RMA (Data/IT Systems), 4 x RMA (Ethics), 4 x RMA (Policy/Quality/RQF/Projects), 2 x RMA (Consulting/External Relations/Research Development), 1 x RMA (General/Operational/Planning).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ages of the interviewees were not requested at interview, nor were their salary levels. Consequently, direct comparisons to the overall participant pool cannot be made. Of further note, all 37 interviewees were degree qualified or higher (assuming the participant with a graduate certificate also held undergraduate qualifications), indicating that those with no university qualifications were not represented at interview. The implications of this are discussed later in this chapter under the heading: ‘Project Challenges and Limitations’.

**Research Phases**

The three data collection phases were as follows:

**PHASE 1 (September 2006 – December 2006):** delivery of the national questionnaire (see questionnaire invite, protocols and instrument, provided in Appendices C, D and E).

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$^{10}$ NOTE: One IRU university was also a REG university. One NGU university was also a REG university, hence the breakdown total = 23 instead of 21 universities. Corresponding total numbers of universities by university grouping is provided in brackets.
PHASE 2 (October 2007 – March 2008): collection of semi-structure interviews – Round 1 and Round 2 conducted by the researcher (see interview protocols and question schedules, provided in Appendices F, G and H).

PHASE 3 (June 2005 – June 2012): paralleled phases 1 and 2 and involved the ongoing literature review, collection and review of public documents, namely:

- university websites;
- Australian Federal Government policy documents associated with the RQF;
- Professional membership bodies (SRA International, NCURA, ARMA, EARMA, ARMS, ATEM) newsletters, reports and websites; and
- Related conference proceedings.

The questionnaire and interview data collection phases were designed to be independent processes in terms of when and how they occurred, however, it was recognised that the effects of preliminary and ongoing analyses arising from each data collection process undertaken, may have had an influence on the approach, focus and detail of the next phase. Such an influence is reflected in the additional question posed to participants during the second round interview phase that was not included in the original design. This will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTATION AND DATA ANALYSES

Questionnaire Design

The information statement regarding participating in the questionnaire component of the study was accessible through a hotlink in the questionnaire instructions (see Appendices C and D). Participants had time from launch in September 2006 until the beginning of December 2006 to participate in the questionnaire, bringing to a close the first data collection phase. The questionnaire itself consisted of 67 questions with a total of just over 140 response lines. The questionnaire (Appendix E) was deployed online and was designed to be completed in one sitting of 30 minutes but could be undertaken over multiple sittings with the use of a personalised password. Neither the questionnaire nor the interview items were trialed, there being no trial sample available given that almost all Australian public universities were involved in the study. However, the items were presented in several forums and, by invitation, to several research professors as well as a former Director of Research Services, to check item clarity and consistency.
In terms of its structural design, the questionnaire consisted of five separate sections as described in the following:

1. **Participant Profile**

The questionnaire is an appropriate instrument to gather detail to determine, and fundamentally ‘map’, the demographic and workplace profile of a group. Questions were posed as to the age, gender, salary levels and qualifications of each participant. Data were also gathered regarding participant campus location, position title and length of time in current position, and level of qualification required for current position. It also provided a snapshot of the immediate organisational structure, with questions on reporting lines both above and below the participant’s current position.

Apart from a question on position title, all of the items in this section were categorical, the responses of which for the most part are reported in Chapter 3. Following the demographic and profile information gathered in this section, the remainder of the questionnaire consisted of a combination of quantitative (categorical/Likert scale) and qualitative (short answer/open-ended) items. Short answer questions comprise more than one third of the total questions on the questionnaire, resulting in 5,000 responses of this type.

2. **Career Profile, Professional Membership and Development, Role Responsibilities**

The second section of the questionnaire continued to build a picture of university research administrators, with questions focused on three distinct areas, namely: career profile; professional memberships and professional development activities; and role responsibilities. The subsection regarding ‘Career Profile’ consisted predominantly of categorical items, the findings of which are reported in Chapter 3. The ‘Professional Memberships and Development’ subsection entailed categorical, Likert scale and open-ended items, the responses of which are reported in Chapters 4 and 5. The last subsection on ‘Role Responsibilities’ consisted of Likert scale and open-ended items, with the findings reported in Chapters 5 and 6.

3. **Workplace Interactions and Communications**

This section of the questionnaire explored the relationships between research administrators and other groups such as academics, research students, other administrators and those external to the university. The section entailed categorical, Likert scale and open-ended items, the responses of which are reported in Chapter 7.
4. **Workplace Opportunities, Role Expectations and Research Services in general**

Here the questionnaire items concentrated in greater detail on the contributions of research services staff, the opportunities available to them in terms of promotion, training and professional development, as well as the expectations and perspectives of themselves and others for their position responsibilities. This section required predominantly open-ended items with some categorical and Likert scale questions, the responses of which are reported across a number of chapters, specifically Chapters 3, 5, 6 and 7.

5. **Managing and Implementing Change (RQF).**

The fifth and last section involved a series of questions concerning the RQF, including participant involvement in the preparations for the proposed policy change, knowledge of the new policy, and perspectives on the significance of this change. Consisting of mainly categorical or Likert scale items, the responses to this section of the questionnaire are reported in Chapter 8. Although this section of the questionnaire and a component of the interview items were devoted to a current reform in process at the time – the RQF – its ultimate replacement by the ERA had no bearing on the data collection processes but was taken into account in the interpretation and analyses of the study (see also ‘Project Challenges and Limitations’ below).

**Questionnaire Data Analyses**

The online questionnaire was linked to the Centre for the Study of Research Training and Impact (SORTI) website, which was electronically housed on a server managed by IT Services within the University of Newcastle’s Corporate Services Division. The online questionnaire was encoded via the formatting of the Survey Manager program. At the completion of the questionnaire, the anonymous results were sent directly to the IT server. Once the data were available, staff from the University’s Corporate Services converted the information to csv files, sending on the de-identified data to the researcher for entry into SPSS software. The raw returned questionnaires were not made available directly to the researcher. Responses to open-ended questionnaire items were converted into a suitable form by the researcher to enable the use of QSR.NVivo 8 software.

The participant sample for the study has been shown to be representative of the population on a number of parameters as discussed earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 3. Although the study drew on a significant proportion of the identified population, a finite population correction was not made for any statistical significance testing carried out. This approach is conservative, with a reduction in the likelihood of claims of difference found as being significant, when they are not (that is, making a Type I error). The significance level for the purpose of this study has,
therefore, been set at a conventional $p < 0.05$. Percentages are reported to the nearest whole number.

Given the large number of statistical tests of significance using the 0.05 probability level, particularly chi-square tests of difference between proportions, it is inevitable that a small percentage of the significant differences claimed would be due to chance. These aberrations were considered preferable to setting a lower probability level (such as 0.01), resulting in a failure to recognise group differences within some specific areas of interest. The resolution chosen for this dilemma should be borne in mind, although, given the consistency of findings, the decision does not invalidate the overall tenor of the results claimed throughout.

Quantitative data analysis was primarily conducted through the use of the SPSS frequencies, cross-tabulations, correlational analyses and analyses of variance. The main foci were presenting frequency distributions and identifying differences in responses of participants by age, gender, qualification, salary level, length of experience, university grouping, and staffing subgroup, using cross-tabulation tables and associated chi-square tests of significance. Most questions were compulsory leading basically to a full response set. Any missing data or other non-responses have been treated as either system-missing or nil response and this is indicated where appropriate.

The interviews generated over 350 pages of interview transcriptions. QSR.NVivo 8 was used in the analysis of all the qualitative data, including the interviews and extended answer responses. The latter were coded at categories (typically at item level) and through subsequent coding typically resulting in emergent themes, but also on occasion grouped and stratified by participant characteristics via the use of NVivo’s matrix coding queries. In most cases, once the data were coded the responses were analysed and reported by frequency as a systematic way of ordering the data and to demonstrate response prevalence. This also helped in linking with other information drawn from the questionnaire and to support initial navigation of the interviews.

The use of simple counts or ‘quasi statistics’ (Becker, 1970, as cited in Maxwell, 2010), in the analysis of this qualitative data, provides ‘…precision to statements about the frequency, amount, or typicality of a particular phenomena…’ (Maxwell, 2010, p. 478). In addition, the use of quantitative data (such as in the stratification of responses by participant characteristics) in analyses of the short answer surveyed responses, enabled the identification of response patterns that were not otherwise discernible in the data. This was found to be particularly useful
given the size of the data set for each of the survey items involved. In this respect, Maxwell (2010) observed that:

Individuals are often unaware of larger patterns beyond their immediate experience, and quantitative data can thus complement the participants’ perspectives in providing a clearer and more in-depth understanding of what’s going on in a particular setting or for individuals who belong to a particular category… (p. 479).

Maxwell (2010) makes clear that there are a number of limitations involved with the use of quantitative data in relation to qualitative results. Consequently, the researcher has been careful to not overreach in any of the conclusions derived through this analytical process.

**Interviews**

*Approach*

The approach taken in the interviews was at the more structured or focused end of ‘in-depth’ interviewing (Minichiello, et al., 1995), referred to more appropriately as ‘semi-structured’ interviewing. This involved providing a full list of questions to participants prior to the interview taking place and before they had given their written consent to participate. Questions were, for the most part, asked in the same order for each interview. Nonetheless, the emphasis placed on each question could change during the interview depending on the interviewee’s response and interest, providing scope for interviewees to express their own concerns or interests within the overall interview topics and to move from the researcher’s focus to foci of their own.

The interviews were conducted by telephone given this was a time and cost efficient method of data collection, particularly as participants were drawn from around Australia. Without this approach the researcher would have been limited to a smaller geographic range of potential participants in view of the logistics involved, thereby denying a large part of the specified population the opportunity to participate in this component of the study.

There were a small number of follow-up questions asked without notice, to follow threads raised through the interview process and/or to explore an issue raised through the auspice of a previous interview. Such questions were prefaced by the researcher, who indicated to the interviewee that they could refuse to answer them if they wished. Interviewees could also indicate upfront if there was a listed question they were not comfortable in answering. Providing interview questions beforehand was not only a mechanism to address potential ethical
concerns, but it was also to ensure that a full ‘breadth’ of issues raised through the interview items could be addressed effectively.

In conducting the interviews the researcher was mindful of the interviewee/interviewer relationship, informed by a number of writers in this area including Kvale (1996), who commented that the dynamics of such interaction must be taken on board before, during and after the interview situation, as well as during the ‘...later analysis of the finished interview...’ (p. 35). In this respect, contact with interviewees was at all times professional, with considerable effort taken to ensure that the interviewee was fully informed in writing of the process involved, prior to the start of the interview process. The researcher was also alert to other potential ‘interviewer effects’ (Frey, 1989, p. 63) such as, ‘adverse impression management’, ‘careless prompting’, ‘biased probing’, and ‘poor maintenance of rapport’ (Oppenheim, 1992, pp. 96-97) during the conduct of the interviews.

In discussing the interviewer/interviewee relationship, Silverman (1993) concluded that by putting aside the issue of potential bias through the interview process and potential distortion of the ‘truth’ given the reliance on the perspective of the interviewee, then what is left is the opportunity to treat ‘...interview accounts as compelling narratives...’ (p. 114).

**Design**

Once questionnaire participants indicated their interest in taking part in the interviews by answering a separate question provided at the completion of the online questionnaire, their email address (as provided by the participant) was electronically sent to the researcher by the Survey Manager administrator. The researcher then emailed the potential interviewee with an information statement for taking part in the interview component of the study (Appendix F), consent form (Appendix G), and a copy of the questions for both interviews (Appendix H). If they decided to participate in the interviews and provided a signed consent form, informants could take part in either one or both interviews. The interviews were conducted by telephone at a time convenient to the participant. They mostly ranged from 30 to 45 minutes. The first interview round, which concentrated on the role of a research services manager or administrator, consisted of 10 questions, whilst the second interview involved six questions, which were focused on policy implementation with specific reference to the RQF. There was a three to six month period between the two rounds of interviews.

Noting the recommendations of Kvale (1996) to set a standard transcribing style from the outset, a transcript protocol was devised before transcription occurred. Interview protocols
included the provision of full transcripts to each informant for verification as part of member checking processes.

**Interview Data Analyses**

A key strength of the interviewing approach taken is the amount of detail and depth that can be generated providing a level of rich, nuanced text from which to undertake analysis and interpretation. There are different levels of interpretation and analysis conducted throughout the interviewing process and once the interviews are completed (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Minichiello, et al. (1995) indicated something similar when they stated that:

> Analysis in research using in-depth interviewing does not occur in a neat ordered fashion immediately after data gathering but in fact simultaneously to it (p. 179).

Drawing on these understandings, at the completion of both stages of the two interview rounds the transcribed data were subjected to various levels of data interrogation, coding and conceptual analysis, and interpretation with the assistance of *QSR.NVivo 8*. The process of analysing the textual data essentially proceeded through the analytical stages, identified by Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 226) as preliminary analysis, detailed/fine-grained analysis and final data analysis through to interpretation. In turn, interpretational contexts such as those provided by Kvale (1996, p. 214) of ‘self-understanding’, ‘critical/commonsense understanding’ and ‘theoretical understanding’, also played a role in the overall direction and findings derived from the research process.

**Overlapping Areas of Analysis**

As demonstrated in the research sub-question matrix (Appendix B), there were a number of overlapping areas of inquiry with both questionnaire and interview items covering similar ground. In analysing and reporting on these ‘cross-over’ areas, the questionnaire data has generally been reported first, followed by the interview data providing both illustrative and additional detail and capturing voice. Quotation is used extensively for the latter. Participant responses to the open-ended items of the questionnaire worked effectively as a way to navigate through the interview transcripts, to note patterns, and identify additional and contradictory or different categories of information in the interviews.

**ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher had worked as a university administrator for 15 years prior to commencing this study and thus had a working knowledge of higher education and university administration,
including a period of time within a research services section of a university. She had not personally been involved with research services for 10 years. Potential conflicts of interest for the researcher were minimised by elapsed time, independence, and the exclusion of her home institution.

This study received ethics approval through the University of Newcastle’s Human Research Ethics Committee on 21 June 2006, approval no: H-236-0606. Ethical considerations required that the researcher ensure confidentiality, noting the potential for competitive concerns between universities and interpersonal concerns within the university. All the forms and letters connected with the study are included in the appendices, and reflect the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and Privacy legislation (see Appendices D, F and G).

Active consent was sought from all participants for all aspects of the research in which they were involved. Participants could withdraw from any elements of the questionnaire and did not have to proceed to completion. It was up to the potential participant to indicate if they wished to take part in either one or both interviews and further, it was up to them to initiate contact with the researcher by email or telephone. Taping of the interview could be stopped at the request of the interviewee and they were each given the opportunity to review their individual transcript and amend or withdraw it. None withdrew.

Potential participants were advised as to how they were selected via their contact details on their respective university website (see Appendix C). The email address list was suppressed in the header so that each recipient only saw their own email address and that of the sender. Potential participants were also advised that there was no link between their email address and the questionnaire and the researcher was unaware of who had or had not completed the questionnaire.

In terms of possible identification, only two locational questions were posed. Firstly, participants were asked to indicate if they were based at a rural or urban campus and to indicate which of the identified five groupings their particular university belonged to. Neither item separately or in combination provided sufficient information to identify actual location.

Following verbal and written consent of the interviewee, each interview was audio-taped. The tapes have no identifying material and the ensuing transcripts were de-identified through coding. The researcher kept the coding master sheet linking the interviewee and the transcripts
only to ensure that the correct transcript was sent to the appropriate interviewee for verification. The transcript itself had no identifying material included in it.

The questionnaire was anonymous and there was a separation between the questionnaire raw data collection and the researcher. No individual has been quoted in such a way as to identify him/her. Participant quotations are provided with a four or five digit referencing system as shown in Table 2.5. This system provides a necessary audit trail back to the data source whilst protecting the identification of the participants themselves.

Table 2.5 Details of Participant Case Numbering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Instrument</th>
<th>Research Instrument Identification Number</th>
<th>Gender of participant (1= male, 2 = female)</th>
<th>Case Number (unique participant identifier)</th>
<th>Reference Numbering Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
<td>3 digits</td>
<td>32023 (3+2+023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Round 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
<td>2 digits</td>
<td>1121 (1+1+21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Round 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
<td>2 digits</td>
<td>2205 (2+2+05)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions were designed not to be intrusive, politically sensitive or expose the participant to potential embarrassment, conflicts of interest or professional indiscretion in terms of sensitive data.

PROJECT CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

There were a number of challenges and limitations identified with the project. For one, the exploratory nature of the study and its broad parameters produced a very large volume of data that was both challenging to manage and to present. Such a challenge is in line with the warning by Creswell (2003), who pointed to the inherent difficulties in executing a mixed-methods research design, and the complexities in addressing discrepancies in results and difficulties with comparisons across different methods. Correspondingly, the range of views of the research participants added unexpected challenges in terms of providing an intelligible narrative, while also demonstrating cross-referencing across data sources and analyses. Ultimately, however, dealing with such differences contributes a richness of understanding and credibility to a study.

The qualitative dominant nature of the study alongside its wide-ranging scope reduced the potential capacity of the quantitative aspects of this study for further analyses. For example, a ‘professional alignment’ scale could have been built into the questionnaire design, thereby allowing deeper analysis in that area of inquiry. However, it can be argued that this ‘gap’
reflects the exploratory and foundational nature of the research. There has, however, been sufficient development of emergent themes and response patterns from which to devise and inform future research, which can take greater advantage of more comprehensive statistical analyses.

Another challenge came in the form of an exponentially growing area of literature in the field of RMA and that of the wider university administration post the data-collection. There was a need to undertake an ongoing synthesis of this developing body of literature in order to maintain the currency of this research over the extended period of time. The most prevalent concern was the potential for the findings to be ‘historically perishable’ (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010, p. 275) before thesis submission. This was addressed in part by publishing during candidature, but some areas, notably the demise of the RQF, meant the author had to address diminished relevance and engage in re-contextualisation.

A related potential limitation was that given the timing of the RQF implementation, it was possible that the findings would be open to a level of bias relating to informants being interviewed in what could be termed a ‘reactionary’ phase. This potential limitation was addressed to some extent through the delayed timing of the second round of interviews which followed between three and six months from the initial round and acknowledgement that the study represents a snapshot in time during a policy implementation-phase event.

In terms of participant profile, there was an insufficient sample size outside the five main staffing subgroups for more detailed analyses. However, it primarily proved to be a limitation for the analysis of role as will be shown in Chapter 6. That being said, the main targeted areas of research service activities were fully represented by the five staffing subgroups referred to throughout the thesis. For the interviews, it was established too late to be rectified that there were no non-university qualified participants involved in the interviews. This was important in hindsight; given that a quarter of the study’s total participants were not university qualified. Hence, the findings were open to a degree of elite bias, although the extent is arguably offset in two ways. Firstly, the many open-ended responses gathered from the full spectrum of participants overlapped in key areas with the questions posed in the interviews. Secondly, although all were university qualified, the interviews were a mix of junior and senior RMA staff.

While the study intentionally captured a policy change, it was not designed as an in-depth or comprehensive study of a policy change enactment intended to capture the ‘…multiactor character of policy action…’ (O’Toole, 2000, p. 266). The RQF provided a way to capture
roles, activities and interactions in more depth, and in this it was successful, regardless of the demise of that particular policy. Even so, some of the researcher’s expectations of the contribution of that part of the study had to be curtailed.

Finally, there was one question that did not capture the detail anticipated. The item: *Was there specific experience required for your position? If Yes, please describe*, proved problematic, as some participants wrote directly from their job descriptions, others wrote one or two words and others indicated they did not remember. Fortunately, there was another question: *On the basis of your experience, if you were asked to give advice to someone about working in Research Services at your level, what advice would you give in terms of – experience required?*, which went some of the way to covering the same territory.

**CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This study was intended to be exploratory, descriptive and foundational, featuring a sequential and primarily qualitative-dominated (Creswell, 2003), mixed-methods design. The instrumentation for the questionnaire and interviews contained multiple overlapping and aligned features. This supports complementarity in intent, as well as triangulation in design. The nationwide online questionnaire of 67 items features categorical and Likert scale items and open ended items (the latter comprise over one third of the total). The questionnaire is followed by two rounds of semi-structured interviews conducted by telephone. The first of these focused on the participant’s role and working relationships, whilst the second focused mainly on implementing policy change more generally and the RQF specifically. Both forms of data collection were complemented by documentary analysis of participant university websites, RMA professional association websites and government RQF policy documentation.

The questionnaire was designed to elicit both broad-stroke and specific findings across the study’s core areas of inquiry. It was conducted anonymously and there was no identifiable link between the 194 total participants who answered the questionnaire and the subgroup of 37 interview participants who volunteered for the interview from this larger group. The questionnaire in this study was also designed to meet the intent of ‘expansion’ into largely unexplored territory. The many open-ended items were directed to obtain, as far as possible, foundational information on RMA, to give form to this group emerging from relative invisibility, and so serve the function to build a solid evidence base from which future research can be developed.
The next chapter presents the findings on the profile, demographic and staffing characteristics of the study’s participants, together with the results of inquiry into their career paths, previous employment experience and future work intentions.
CHAPTER 3
DEMOGRAPHIC AND CAREER PROFILES

Drawing on questionnaire data from this study, this chapter reports on the first of the six core areas of inquiry – the demographic analysis of university research services staff. Given so little detail is known about this staffing group, this chapter provides a profile that comprises: age; gender; qualification and salary level; characteristics of staffing and organisational positions; reporting lines; career alignment; and employment history.

The chapter is reported in two sections. The first section, titled ‘Participant Profile’, describes demographic and staffing characteristics. Age, gender and salary levels are contrasted with the 2006 equivalent collective characteristics of central administration groups across all Australian universities. Comparisons are also drawn between the 2006 data collected for this study and that reported by Shelley (2008), from her study in 2005 involving 120 English university RMA. Participant staffing subgroups introduced in Chapter 2 are further explored in this chapter, highlighting profile differences across the eight identified occupational streams.

The second section, titled ‘Career Profile’ provides an overview of participants’ career paths, including previous areas of work both inside and outside the higher education sector. Career alignment, length-of-service and previous academic and research experience are investigated, together with an examination of the factors behind participants’ decisions to work in universities and/or research services. The latter inquiry is contrasted with an examination of whether or not participants expected to remain in a research services role five years from the time of survey. Participant perspectives on the personal characteristics and previous experience required to undertake RMA roles are also presented.

Table 3.1 summarises the thematic structure of this chapter, research questions posed, and corresponding data source. For ease of reference the question numbers referred to in Table 3.1 are drawn from the study’s questionnaire, a copy of which is provided in Appendix E.
Table 3.1 Overview of Chapter’s Thematic Structure, Items and Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMATIC STRUCTURE</th>
<th>ITEMS AND RESPONSE RATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| PARTICIPANT PROFILE| This section presents participant (n = 194) responses to the following questionnaire items:  
Q1) Campus Location  
Q2) Age  
Q3) Gender  
Q4) Education Level  
Q5) Position Title  
Q6) How long have you been in your current position?  
Q7) What specific level of qualification was required for your current position?  
Q8) Who do you directly report to in your current position?  
Q9) How many staff report to you in your current position?  
Q10) Salary Level  
Q11) How long have you been at your current salary level? |

| CAREER PROFILE | This section presents participant (n = 194) responses to the following questionnaire items:  
Q12) How long have you worked in universities in total?  
Q13) How long have you worked in your current university in total?  
Q14) How long have you worked in Research Services?  
Q15) Do you feel your career path is most closely aligned to (list of options)?  
Q16 and 17) Within/outside the University sector, what other areas have you worked in (list of options)?  
Q18a and 20a) Was it always your intention to work in universities/research services?  
Q18b and 20b) If No, where did you intend to work?  
Q19 and 21) What factor/s carried the most weight in terms of your decision to work in universities/research services?  
Q22a) Have you ever been employed as an academic?  
Q23a) Have you personally undertaken research?  
Q23b) If Yes, what form did it take?  
Q48) On the basis of your experience, if you were asked to give advice to someone about working in Research Services, at your level, what advice would you give them in terms of: a) Minimum entry qualification? b) Experience required? c) Personal Characteristics?  
Q50a) Would you still like to be in a Research Services Career five years from now?  
Q50b) If not, which of the following (list of options) is most likely to occur? |

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The demographic findings reported in this section are drawn from participant responses to the questionnaire items listed in Table 3.1.
Gender

Of the 194 questionnaire participants 143 (74 per cent) were female and 51 (26 per cent) were male. This reflected the gender characteristics of the identified population, which was 77 per cent female and 23 per cent male. According to trend data for the period 2001-2007 for central university administration (DEEWR, 2008), a group which includes research services staff, there has been a stable gender ratio of two-thirds female to one-third male staff. This ratio has fluctuated by no more than one per cent during the reviewed seven year period. Given this, it can be said that the female-to-male ratio found for research service offices was higher than that reported for centralised university administration in total, at the time of study. A similarly high female ratio was found in Shelley’s (2008) study of English university RMA \((n = 120)\), of which 76 per cent were female.

Research administrator profile data from two US studies conducted in 2005 \((n = 226)\) (T. Roberts & House, 2006) and 2010 \((n = 1,143)\) (Shambrook & Roberts, 2011) have not been used for comparative purposes with this current study’s overall participant group, specifically because the participants in both USA studies were only drawn from the membership of the NCURA. Comparisons would also have been compromised given that the 2005 profile data was based on a selected geographical region, whilst the 2010 profile data was collected on a nation-wide basis. However, the profile findings from the 2010 study are revisited in Chapter 5 for comparison with participants from this current study who indicated they were members of ARMS. For now, what can be said from these two international RMA profile studies in relation to the findings in Shelley’s RMA profile data and the RMA data reported in this study, is that the NCURA membership is a largely feminised one with 76 per cent (2005) and 80 per cent (2010) of the sampled population being female.

Age

The age distribution of participants by gender is shown in Figure 3.2. The median age was 44.5 years. A chi-square test indicated that there was no significant decadal age difference between male and female participants \(\chi^2 = 3.327, \text{df} = 4, p = 0.505\). When combined, a distribution with a peak in the 40-49 decadal age range was evident for participants, mirroring the age profile of the 2006 total population of general staff in Australian universities (DEST, 2006b) (a similar age profile was found in the aforementioned 2010 NCURA profile study (Shambrook & Roberts, 2011)). In a comparison of overall age distributions, the studied group is comparatively older with two-thirds being 40 years of age or older, whereas the English study (Shelley, 2008) reported just under half of the 120 respondents being aged 39 or less.
Campus Location

The majority of participants (83 per cent) were based at a campus located in a major metropolitan area such as a capital city, 11 per cent were situated at a campus in a major regional city or other metropolitan area and the remainder at a campus in a rural location. All participants based at a rural campus were female, whilst 96 per cent of all male participants were based on a campus in a major metropolitan area.

Education Level

The educational level of participants is reported in Table 3.3. The majority held at least a university undergraduate degree. In percentage terms, male participants were more likely to be university qualified than female participants, with more than one third holding a research higher degree compared to just 15 per cent of females. A chi-square test conducted on the four levels of education by gender was significant ($\chi^2 = 10.409$, df = 3, $p = .015$). The observed versus expected frequencies indicated differences at the two ends of the education spectrum, with male participants more likely to be research higher degree qualified and less likely to be non-university qualified than female participants. Participant age was not found to be a significant factor in terms of the educational level obtained.
By contrast, in Shelley’s (2008) study the educational profile of the 120 English respondents revealed a smaller percentage without university qualifications (14 per cent as opposed to 26 per cent) but with roughly similar percentages of postgraduates (47 per cent as opposed to 45 per cent) (noting the earlier rider regarding the USA RMA profile studies – the 2010 study (Shambrook & Roberts, 2011) found that almost 90 per cent of participant NCURA members held at least a bachelor degree). The gendered pattern of qualifications found in this research (more female participants than males without university qualifications and more male participants than females holding doctoral qualifications) was also found in the English data.

Table 3.3 Highest Educational Level by Gender (n = 194)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No University Qualification</th>
<th>Bachelor Degree or Equivalent</th>
<th>Other Postgraduate Qualifications</th>
<th>Higher Research Degree</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4 2006 Highest Educational Level of Participants and University Academics by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% per gender</td>
<td>% per gender</td>
<td>% per total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants (n = 51)</td>
<td>Academics (n = 23760)</td>
<td>Participants (n = 143)</td>
<td>Academics (n = 16456)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate by Research or Coursework</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters by Research or Coursework</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Postgraduate Degree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Information</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4 provides a comparison between the highest educational level (using 2006 DEST qualification categories) of participants with that of academic staff across all Australian universities, as drawn from the 2006 Staff: Selected Higher Education Statistics (DEST, 2006b). As shown, academics were four times more likely to hold a doctoral qualification than were the
study’s participants, with almost equal percentages reported for both groups at the masters’
degree level. Participants were more likely to have exited at a bachelor level or to have
obtained non-university qualifications than were academics. Whilst these comparisons are
somewhat limited, particularly given the lack of detailed available data, it does provide an
interesting contrast between the education levels of this subgroup of university administrative
staff and the wider academic body at a snapshot in time.

**Qualification Level Comparisons**

Comparisons were undertaken to test for differences between participant educational levels
(Q4) (using the full qualification spectrum as utilised in Table 3.5), employer ‘essential’
qualification requirements for respective RMA positions (Q7) and what participants thought
were the minimum qualifications necessary to perform in their current role (Q48a). All
participants addressed two of these three questions on education but only 181 participants
responded to the question on recommended qualifications.

**Table 3.5 Participant Qualification by Essential and Recommended Qualifications for Position**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION</th>
<th>Highest Qualification of Participants (n = 194)</th>
<th>Essential Qualification for Position (Employer) (n = 194)</th>
<th>Recommended Qualification for Position (Participant) (n = 181)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience only</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate/Graduate Certificate/Associate Diploma</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Diploma</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters by Coursework</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters by Research</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD and Professional Doctorate</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the findings reported in Table 3.5 indicate, the education levels of participants ranged from
no qualifications to doctoral level, with around three-quarters holding a bachelor degree or
above. The predominant essential qualification required for the positions held by just over half
of all participants was reported to be a bachelor degree, with just over a quarter indicating that either no qualification was specified for their position and/or only relevant experience was required. In turn, when participants were asked what the minimum level of qualification they thought necessary to carry-out the requirements of their current research services position (at their current salary level), just under half of the 181 participants who addressed the question recommended a bachelor degree. Additionally, almost a quarter recommended postgraduate qualifications as being essential for their position, with an emphasis on having a research component within the degree and/or research administrative or research management experience.

The data provides *prima facie* evidence that the essential qualification for participants’ current research service positions was at least met by their corresponding personal education levels, as would be expected. To test this assumption, the level of each participant’s qualification was compared to the level of qualification required for their position, the findings of which are contained in Table 3.6. The results indicated that the overwhelming majority matched or exceeded the ‘essential’ qualification required for their current position by one or more levels.

**Table 3.6 Participant Qualification by Essential Qualification for Position (n = 194)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION</th>
<th>Highest Qualification of Participant Compared with Essential Qualification for Position (Employer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDERQUALIFIED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By 1 or more levels</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUALIFICATION matches position requirement</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERQUALIFIED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By 1 level</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By 2 levels</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By 3 levels</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By 4 or more levels</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, a comparison was made between the recommended qualification and the essential qualification requirements for the 181 participants who addressed this questionnaire item. The findings as presented in Table 3.7 indicated that more than half of participant recommendations matched the essential qualification required for their position, whilst almost a third recommended a higher qualification by one or more levels.

Two particular features of these comparative analyses are that over half of participants are ‘overqualified’ for their current position by one or more educational levels, whilst just under a
third of participants reported that the level of qualification required for their position is too low by one or more levels. Whilst the first feature may be simply a function of increasing credentialism in the workplace, the latter feature – assuming the accuracy of participant recommendations – indicates that the field of university RMA is increasing in complexity or at the very least requires higher-order conceptual skills, thereby resulting in the need for higher education levels of those employed in this area.

Table 3.7 Recommended versus Required Essential Qualification Level for Position (n = 181)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION</th>
<th>Recommended Qualification for Position (Participant) compared with Essential Qualification for Position (Employer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOMMENDATION UNDER REQUIREMENT</td>
<td>By 1 or more levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOMMENDATION EQUALS REQUIREMENT</td>
<td>recommended qualification matches position requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOMMENDATION OVER REQUIREMENT</td>
<td>By 1 level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By 2 levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By 3 levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By 4 or more levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to see whether the essential qualification level for an RMA position had increased over time, a crosstabulation was conducted involving three variables, namely: the essential education qualification level for participants current position (Q7); the length of time participants had held their current position (Q6); and participant salary level (Q10). The results of the crosstabulation as presented in Table 3.8 show a broadening of qualification categories per salary level over time, thereby indicating an upwards trend in the minimum qualifications required for research service positions. These findings also appear to indicate that the prerequisite of a postgraduate qualification of any kind for a research services position is a relatively recent phenomenon, with 22 of the 25 instances involving participants with five years or less experience in a research services position.

Conversely, as shown in Table 3.8 almost 80 per cent of the 58 participants who indicated that a university qualification was not a minimum education requirement for their current position, had been incumbent in that role for five or fewer years. However, further analysis indicated that of the 52 (from a possible 58) participants who went on to indicate a recommended qualification, a majority of those who were degree qualified recommended at least a degree
level educational requirement for their current role. Further, almost 90 per cent of participants who indicated agreement with no university qualifications requirement for their current position were not university qualified and all but three of these participants were at HEW level 6-7 or below. In short, from the perspective of the study’s participants it would appear that the higher the incumbent’s HEW salary level, the greater the need for a minimum requirement of undergraduate qualifications in a research service position. According to participant responses, this perspective appears to be shared to an extent by respective university employers of this staffing group, although gaps remain between participant recommendations and employer education requirements as shown earlier in Table 3.7.

Table 3.8 Essential Qualification Level by Length-of-Service in Current Position by Participant Salary Level (n = 194)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification Level</th>
<th>Length-of-Service</th>
<th>No University Qualification</th>
<th>Bachelor Degree or Equivalent</th>
<th>Other Postgraduate Qualifications</th>
<th>Higher Research Degree</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 2-5 Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 6-7 Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 8-9 Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 10-10+ Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, the findings of a rising occupational credentialism (which appears to be mostly employee and to a lesser extent, employer led) points to increasing role complexity or at the very least, an increasing call for demonstrated higher-order conceptual skills in Australian research support work. This conclusion supports that of Shelley’s study in which RMA work in England was shown to have increased in complexity over time, leading to the requirement of a ‘…different skill set…’ (2008, p. 147) to that previously needed. Shelley also reported that she found that the majority of her study’s participants with higher degree qualifications had only recently taken on an RMA position, thereby indicating a ‘…shift in the occupational group..’ (2010b, p. 50). Similarly, of the 40 HDR qualified participants in this current study, 29 (73 per cent) reported less than five years’ experience in a research services area, likewise indicating a shift in the Australian RMA staffing dynamic. On a related note, this study’s inquiry into participant perspectives on the degree of change in RMA work is also explored in Chapter 5.

Remuneration

Table 3.9 reports participant salary levels by gender, noting that the original six category HEW\textsuperscript{11} salary scale which appeared in the questionnaire (Q10) has been collapsed at the two extremes for analysis and reporting purposes, given correspondingly low participant numbers. As shown, almost two-thirds of participants were in the HEW 6-7 to HEW 8-9 salary ranges. For gender, the highest proportion of male participants was in the HEW 8-9 salary range, whilst for females it was the HEW 6-7 range. Larger proportions of those on HEW 10-10+ were male participants and those on HEW 2-3/4-5 ranges were female. A chi-square test conducted on the four salary levels by gender was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 11.341, df = 3, p = .010$). The observed versus expected frequencies indicated a concentration of female participants at the lower end of the salary scale and an underrepresentation at the upper end, with the reverse finding for male participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary Level</th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 2-3/4-5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 6-7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 8-9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 10-10+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{11} Higher Education Worker (HEW) is the typical title given to the staffing award salary scale for non-academic staff in Australian universities – also known as Higher Education Officer (HEO).
When the 2006 salary levels of central university administration (DEEWR, 2008) were compared to the salary levels of the participant group, the latter had a higher median salary with a greater proportion of staff at the higher HEW levels. Similarly, the participant group also reported a higher median salary range compared to the median salary range of the 2005 university general staff population of HEW 4-5 (Dobson, 2008). Detailed comparative salary data were not available from the English study (Shelley, 2008).

A crosstabulation of gender and qualifications controlled by salary level indicated that neither male nor female participants were appointed beyond a HEW 8-9 unless they held a university qualification. There were no male postgraduates under HEW 6-7, whilst there were three female participants in this category. Participants with research higher degrees were evenly distributed between salary levels of HEW 6-7, HEW 8-9 and HEW 10-10+. Over half of the female participants with no university qualifications were located within the HEW 2-5 range, while half of the male participants without university qualifications were at HEW 8-9. These results would seem to indicate that there are factors, other than educational levels, behind the finding that male respondents were appointed to salary levels significantly higher than females. Tests of significance were not performed given the large number of small cell counts less than five.

**Length of Time at Salary Level**

Over 80 per cent of participants indicated that they had been at their current salary level for five years or less and in their current position for five years or less (Q11). Further, when controlled for length-of-service in universities (Q12) (note length-of-service is explored in more detail in the next section), an analysis of salary levels by gender found that a greater proportion of male participants were on higher salary levels, regardless of the length of time they worked in universities compared to females. That is, male participants were initially appointed at higher salary levels and were moving through each HEW level faster than females, with only 10 per cent of male respondents remaining at HEW 4-5 within the first five years of service compared to 46 per cent of females. No male participant was at HEW 4-5 or below after five years of university service, compared to 21 per cent of females at the 6-10 year period (further reducing to 10 per cent at the 10+ year period). Tests of significance were not performed given the large number of small cell counts less than five.

**Reporting Lines**

More than half of all participants (54 per cent) had line management responsibilities for other staff (Q9). Around half of these (46 per cent) had responsibility for up to 10 staff and a further
eight per cent for 11 or more staff. The vast majority of participants reported to either a Research Director/Head of Research Office (48 per cent) or the Manager of Section/Team Leader (36 per cent). A detailed breakdown of reporting lines by staffing subgroup and by salary level appear in broad ‘Statements of Responsibility’ that were constructed from participant role statements and this is discussed in Chapter 6.

**Position Title**

Responses to the questionnaire item querying the position title of participants (Q5) were analysed and categorised into eight different staffing subgroups (as introduced in Chapter 2), namely:

1. Deputy Director/Director;
2. Research Manager/Administrator (Grants/Finance);
3. Research Manager/Administrator (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students);
4. Research Manager/Administrator (Ethics);
5. Research Manager/Administrator (Data/IT Systems);
6. Research Manager/Administrator (Policy/Quality/RQF/Projects);
7. Research Manager/Administrator (General/Operational/Planning); and

The first five listed staffing subgroups cover the core responsibility areas specifically targeted by this research, together representing 84 per cent of participants. The remaining three staffing subgroups represent a mixture of like areas of responsibilities. A crosstabulation of participants by staffing subgroup by gender and salary level arranged by largest to smallest group size, is provided in Table 3.10. This information is in addition to the compositional data provided in Chapter 2, in which the participant staffing subgroup profile was compared to that of the total identified population.

It can be seen in Table 3.10 that: the highest frequency of female participants are located at level HEW 6-7 ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’; the highest frequency of male participants are level HEW10-10+ ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’; the staffing subgroup closest to a 50/50 male-to-female ratio is ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’; the only staffing subgroup consisting of female participants only is ‘RMA (Contracts/Consulting/External Relations/Research Development)’; and no staffing subgroup is made up of male participants only. Further, given the population ratio of all participants is 1:3.5 (where males $n = 51$, females $n = 143$), the most
A disproportionate male-to-female ratio appears in the staffing subgroup ‘RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)’, in which the ratio is 1:17.5 (where males $n = 2$, females $n = 35$). Of the five main staffing subgroups, ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’ reported the highest overall salaries with 85 per cent in the HEW 10-10+ range, while the next highest was ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ with 48 per cent of these participants in the top two salary ranges.

**Table 3.10 Staffing Subgroup by Gender and Salary Level ($n = 194$)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAFFING SUBGROUP</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>CURRENT HEW SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2-3/4-5</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>10-10+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$%$</td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$%$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Grants/Finance)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Data/IT Systems)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Ethics)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Director/Director</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (General/Operational/Planning)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Contracts/Consulting/External Relations/Research Development)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Policy/Quality/RQF/Projects)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CAREER PROFILE

Length-of-Service

Participants were asked about the length of time they had worked in: universities overall (Q12); in their current university (Q13); and in research services (Q14). Responses to these three questionnaire items are reported together in Table 3.11. Length-of-service ranged from less than a year to over 20 years. The most frequent length-of-service in ‘research services’ was 1-3 years and in the ‘current university’ and in ‘universities in general’ it was 6-10 years respectively.

Table 3.11 Length-of-Service in Current University, Universities Overall and Research Services (n = 194)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME PERIOD</th>
<th>Length-of-service in current university</th>
<th>Length-of-service in universities overall</th>
<th>Length-of-service in research services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 year</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5 years</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+ years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results appear to indicate that research service areas have either expanded in recent years or there has been a high turnover of staff during this period, given almost two-thirds of participants had worked in research services for five years or less. There was also some evidence of a level of staff churn across the sector in the period 2003 to 2006, given the discrepancies between length-of-service in ‘current university’ and that of ‘universities overall’ in the ‘1-3 years’ and ‘<1 year’ time scale categories.

Career Alignment

Participants were asked whether they felt their career path was most closely aligned to ‘Research Services’, ‘University Administration’, ‘Other University Activity’, ‘Non-University Activity’ or ‘Other’ (Q15). Just over half of all questionnaire participants reported a professional alignment or affinity with a career in ‘Research Services’ (53 per cent), with almost a third to ‘University Administration’ (33 per cent). Of the remainder, eight per cent indicated they identified with a ‘Non-University Activity’ and five per cent with an ‘Other
University Activity’. Responses under the option of ‘Other’ were examined and subsequently either recoded to one of the four original listed options or to the emerging response category: ‘No Career Alignment’, (this emerging category also captured situations in which a participant indicated their current position was not aligned with their planned career path – one per cent).

The response category ‘Other University Activity’ captured situations in which participants were ‘out-posted’ to research services from another university section to which they felt greater professional affinity (for example: a finance or IT section). The response category of ‘Non-University Activity’ was used in instances where participants were members of an established profession or formalised body such as the legal profession, the functions of which take place within a university but can be separately identified having relevance outside of the higher education sector.

A chi-square test indicated significant differences in participant choice between the two main areas of career alignment ‘Research Services’ or ‘University Administration’, by four levels of education (‘No University Qualification’, ‘Bachelor Degree of Equivalent’, ‘Other Postgraduate Qualifications’ and ‘HDR Qualifications’) ($\chi^2 = 8.512$, df = 3, $p = 0.037$). The observed versus expected frequencies indicated differences at the two ends of the education spectrum, with participants without university qualifications more likely to indicate a ‘University Administration’ career alignment and those who were HDR qualified more likely to indicate a ‘Research Services’ career alignment. Further analyses indicated that only those participants with HDR qualifications were significantly more likely to have indicated a ‘Research Services’ career path ($\chi^2 = 6.626$, df = 1, $p = .010$), than were participants at the remaining three education levels. Further chi-square tests found no significant difference in participant choice between the two main areas of career alignment ‘Research Services’ or ‘University Administration’ by gender ($\chi^2 = 7.656$, df = 3, $p = 0.054$), by salary level ($\chi^2 = 1.414$, df = 1, $p = 0.234$) or by the five main staffing subgroups ($\chi^2 = 6.585$, df = 4, $p = 0.159$).

**Career Paths**

*Previous Positions Held*

Participants were asked to point out from a range of listed options (see left axis of Figures 3.13 and 3.15) where they had previously worked both within (Q16) and external (Q17) to the university sector or otherwise to indicate ‘Not Applicable’. The responses are described in Figures 3.13 (internal university positions) and 3.15 (external areas of employment), noting that multiple selections could occur in both instances. Responses indicating ‘Other’ were coded to the most appropriate category where possible and many such responses to the question on
previous employment within universities indicated previous academic experience, resulting in an emerging response category of ‘Academic/Research Assistant’\textsuperscript{12}. The response categories in Figures 3.13 and 3.15 have been ordered to reflect highest to lowest percentage frequency for the combined responses of males ($n = 51$) and females ($n = 143$).

**Figure 3.13** Previous Employment within a University ($n = 194$)

As Figure 3.13 illustrates, more than one third of participants previously worked in academic support areas such as faculties, colleges and schools. The next highest response area indicated just under one third of participants had undertaken previous roles in research services. It would appear from this that over two-thirds of participants were either currently employed in their first position within a research services section at the time of this study and/or at the very least had not been employed in any other university’s research services section.

\textsuperscript{12} Almost a third of participants indicated in a separate questionnaire item reported later in this section that they had previously been employed as an Academic.
In a crosstabulation of those participants indicating no previous university employment (‘Not Applicable’) and membership of one of the five main staffing subgroups, the most interesting finding was that just over half of ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ participants indicated no previous employment in other areas of a university. When the ‘Not Applicable’ responses were stratified by gender, 31 per cent of male participants indicated that they had no prior work experience in any other section of a university as opposed to 92 per cent of female participants who did. This contributes to the overall finding of gendered differences in participant employment histories within a university setting, as further evidenced by the finding that 58 per cent of female participants had worked in two or more separate university areas other than a research services office compared to 26 per cent of males, as shown in the crosstabulation in Table 3.14.

Table 3.14 Number of Separate Areas of Employment within a University (n = 194)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Separate Areas of Employment</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses from all 194 participants regarding previous employment outside of the university sector are provided in percentage terms in Figure 3.15. The employment categories used for this item, which appear on the left axis were largely drawn from ABS occupational categories (ABS, 2001).

In Figure 3.15, the employment category of ‘Research’ (external to a university) was added to the original questionnaire item’s list of options following coding of participant responses received to the original response category of ‘Other’. As shown, just under a third of participants had experience in a government department prior to working in a university, with the next largest area of previous employment being (non-tertiary) education. In both of these instances similar percentages of male versus female participants are indicated. A further feature of the responses is that over 90 per cent of participants reported having prior work experience outside of the university sector. No comparable data had been found in relation to previous employment of university general staff at the time of study.
Previous Experience

Academic/Research Experience

Participants were asked if they had previous employment as an academic (Q22a) and whether or not they had previous research experience (Q23a) and what that research experience consisted of (Q23b). Thirty percent of all questionnaire participants indicated previous employment as an academic, with 51 per cent having conducted some form of research. When the responses were crosstabulated against the five main staffing subgroups, it was revealed that just over half of the 20 ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’ and half of the 14 ‘RMA (Ethics)’ participants were once academics and that all but two of the study’s ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’ had previously undertaken some form of research. For all those reporting previous
research experience \((n = 98)\), their answers (a total of 110) were analysed and grouped under five separate headings ordered to reflect highest to lowest response frequency:

1. ‘Undertaking research higher degree’ (41 per cent of responses);
2. ‘Discipline specific research’. This category can be illustrated by the example: ‘I undertook medical research’ (33 per cent of responses);
3. ‘Research Officer/Assistant’ (16 per cent of responses);
4. ‘Research consultancy’. This category can be illustrated by the example: ‘I undertook contract research’ (six per cent of responses); and
5. ‘Did not specify research activity undertaken’ (four per cent of responses).

**Recommended Previous Experience**

The responses to the open-ended questionnaire item \((Q48b)\), ‘On the basis of your experience, if you were asked to give advice to someone about working in Research Services, at your level, what advice would you give them in terms of experience required?’, were put into **QSR.NVivo** 8, analysed for common categories and then coded to same. The content of the 186 valid responses were coded to over 40 (20 of which had three references or less) emerging response categories, which in turn were grouped under nine separate headings developed from the analysis. Figure 3.16 shows the percentage frequency of occurrences for each of the nine groupings, noting that responses could be coded to more than one.

As shown, ‘Areas of Previous Employment’ and ‘Demonstrated Experience, Skills or Aptitude’ appeared as the two areas in which participant responses were most concentrated, followed by ‘Research and Research-Related Experience’. Individual response categories of five or more occurrences are discussed next in order of highest to lowest number of occurrences by response headings (with the exclusion of the groupings ‘Unspecified Experience’ and ‘No Previous Experience Required’). Additional commentary is provided in cases were there appears to be a greater concentration of responses in one or more categories, following stratification of the response categories by the five main staffing subgroups and by participant salary level.
Areas of Previous Employment ($n = 97$)

Just over two-thirds of participant responses in this category recommended experience ‘Working in a University Environment’ and/or having experience ‘Working/Dealing with Academics’. The recommended experience in a tertiary setting ranged from the general ‘Experience in a university environment’ ($32185$), to the more specific:

Experience in different parts of the university is essential – must have faculty level, department level and central unit experience. Must have broad-enough experience to have genuine empathy for clients. Experience as a postgraduate student and researcher is also very helpful ($32181$).

Of particular note is that 43 per cent of all ‘RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)’ participants recommended previous experience in a university setting, compared with 30 per cent or less in each of the remaining four main staffing subgroups. Further, 71 per cent of participants on a HEW 8-9 salary level recommended previous experience in a university, compared to 47 per cent or less in each of the three remaining salary level groupings. Of the remaining responses: 11 per cent recommended experience in or at least an ‘Understanding of a Research Environment’, which may or may not have been part of a university; five per cent recommended experience in the ‘Public Sector’ and a further five per cent recommended demonstrated experience in ‘Busy and Demanding Work Environments’.
Demonstrated Experience, Skills or Aptitude (n = 86)
The leading response category under this heading capturing 20 per cent of the responses was experience or demonstrated ability to work with ‘Policy or Legislative Guidelines’, including analysis, interpretation and/or knowledge of. Experience in ‘Report and/or Formal Writing’ was recommended in 15 per cent of the responses, whilst knowledge, understanding and/or demonstrated experience in ‘IP/Contracts (Law)/Commercialisation’ featured in 13 per cent of responses. The remaining response categories (of five occurrences or more) included: experience in ‘Project Management’ (12 per cent); experience ‘Working with People at all Levels (or nationalities/backgrounds)’ (10 per cent); demonstrated experience in ‘Analysis or Problem-Solving’ (seven per cent); and ‘Negotiation’ experience (six per cent). In a frequency analysis of occurrence of response stratified by salary level and by staffing subgroup, there did not appear to be any patterning of responses for these participant characteristics under this heading.

Research and Research-Related Experience (n = 56)
More than half the responses under this heading related to either ‘Specified Research Management or Administrative (RMA) Experience’ (34 per cent) or ‘Unspecified RMA Experience’ (25 per cent). The following contrasting examples typify these two response categories:

2+ years of coordinating/managing major grant rounds and 2+ years’ experience as a case manager handling routine and non-routine post-award reporting and issues on funded grants (32077).

At least a couple of years in a research services role of some kind… (32032).

Of note is that just over half of those participants recommending specified RMA experience were ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’ participants. Likewise, 74 per cent of those participants who recommended specified RMA experience were in the two middle salary ranges of HEW 6-7 and HEW 8-9, whilst 86 per cent recommending non-specified RMA experience were in the two upper salary ranges of HEW 8-9 and HEW 10-10+.

Twenty per cent of responses under this heading recommended ‘Actual Research Experience’, for example; ‘Research experience is essential so that you understand the context of what you are doing’ (32020). Most of the participants who made this recommendation were in the top
two salary levels. In turn, 16 per cent of responses under this heading were captured by the recommendation for the need to have an ‘Awareness or Knowledge of the Research Process’.

**Administration Experience (n = 38)**

There were two response categories under this heading, namely: ‘Customer Service’ (26 per cent of responses) and ‘General or Unspecified Administrative Experience’ (74 per cent of responses). Recommendations contained in the latter response category included: ‘Strong all-round administrative experience…’ (32100); ‘10 years’ full-time administration experience…’ (32076); and

…any type of administrative experience at a School, Department or Faculty Level – which will give BROAD experience rather than deep but narrow focus… (32271).

Half of the responses recommending: ‘General or Unspecified Administrative Experience’ were either ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’ or ‘RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)’ participants and three-quarters of these recommendations were from participants in the two lower salary ranges (HEW 2-5 and HEW 6-7).

**IT Experience (n = 32)**

There were two response categories under this heading, namely: ‘Database or Information Management Experience’ (63 per cent of responses) and ‘Computing Skills’ (38 per cent of responses). Just under half of the recommendations in the latter response category were ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ participants.

**Management Experience (n = 23)**

This heading captured two main response categories, these being: ‘Generalist or Unspecified Management Experience’ (39 per cent of responses); and/or ‘Experience Managing Staff’ (39 per cent of responses). The remaining response categories under this heading (consisting of five responses or less) were: ‘Experience Managing a Team’, and ‘Experience Managing Stakeholder/Client Relationships’.

**Financial Experience (n = 13)**

This heading consisted of one response category only, this being ‘Financial or Funding Experience’, which included recommendations such as: ‘Budget experience in the public sector would be useful…’ (32118); and ‘Working in project accounting and research project finance within a faculty…’ (31227).
Overall, these findings suggest participants hold competing ideas about what previous experience is necessary in order to work effectively within a research service area. Such differences are demonstrated by three key dichotomies arising in the responses, namely, the recommended need for: an administrative versus a research/research-related background; specified ‘narrow/specialised’ tracks of experience/training versus ‘broad experience/training’; plus, the need to have experience in a university sector versus experience outside the sector. In turn, the list of competencies (demonstrated experience, skills or aptitude) described in the next subsection were derived from participants’ responses regarding recommended personal characteristics, and highlight an array of soft and hard skills suggested for those in RMA positions.

Personal Characteristics

Participants were asked to indicate the personal characteristics thought appropriate to undertake their roles within a research services setting (Q48e). The short answer responses received from 185 participants encompassed a wide range of personal traits and soft skills, plus some hard skills – most of the latter which were related to computer or software use. In an initial attempt to make sense of the data, a word frequency query was run through QSR.NVivo 8 which looked at words consisting of four or more letters. The top 10 words or phrases in order of prominence were: ‘Ability’; ‘Good’; ‘Skills’; ‘Patience’; ‘Work’; ‘Communication’; ‘Able’; ‘Attention to Detail’; ‘Sense of Humour’; and ‘People’. Of note is that none of these words appeared in the wording of the related questionnaire item.

All occurrences of the three most frequently appearing words: ‘Ability’; ‘Good’; and ‘Skills’, were examined in the context of each corresponding participant response to determine the associated personal characteristics recommended. From this analysis, an illustrative (non-definitive) list of recommended personal characteristics was compiled using the three most frequently appearing words as the main response categories. Participant recommendations are presented by response category in Table 3.17, either verbatim or by the paraphrasing of the relevant questionnaire responses (the recommended characteristics are not ordered). Similar or the same recommended characteristics may appear in one or more response categories, albeit in a different form.
Table 3.17 Recommended Personal Characteristics of Research Services Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE CATEGORY</th>
<th>RECOMMENDED PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS (ABILITIES/TRAITS/SKILLS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ABILITY:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognition</td>
<td>- to think clearly and break down the complex to the understandable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to learn quickly/to comprehend complex concepts quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to tolerate ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to analyse/to problem-solve/to think outside the box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to make decisions and balance risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to focus on general outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to concentrate on one task for extended periods of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>- to communicate effectively: at all levels/with a wide variety of stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to maintain confidentiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>- to interact with people from a variety of countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to counsel people/to negotiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to relate to people who are highly specialised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to work in a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to appropriately discern across competing demands for attention and act accordingly/to get on with people but still be able to say no!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to get the best out of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- confidence in one’s own ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/Work Environment</td>
<td>- to prioritise workload/work under pressure/multitask/meet deadlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to cope with high volume/high stress workplace/handle difficult situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to perform tasks well/to do at times menial/repetitive tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to take initiative/to work independently/be professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to respond to change/be flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GOOD:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aptitude</td>
<td>- attention to detail/memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- lateral thinking abilities/analytical ability/judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- team worker/motivating others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competencies</td>
<td>- communicator/listener/negotiator/interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- building relationship skills with co-workers and academic staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- time management/organisational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- problem solving/troubleshooting skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Traits</td>
<td>- personality/people person/a presence (not a shrinking violet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- positive attitude/sense of humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SKILLS:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- (good/strong/highly developed/excellent) communication (verbal and written)/(good) listening /(good) negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- (good/highly developed/excellent) organisational/time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- (good/strong/highly developed/excellent) interpersonal/people/team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- (highly developed) research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- (good) analytical/problem-solving/troubleshooting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- (good/excellent) computer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 3.17, recommended characteristics which involved the most frequently appearing word, namely, ‘Ability’, have been organised around the following four emerging
response subheadings: ‘Cognition’; ‘Communication’; ‘Interpersonal’; and ‘Work/Work Environment’. For ‘Good’, the three emerging response subheadings were: ‘Aptitude’; Competencies’; and ‘Personality Traits’. In the response category of ‘Skills’, the degree of skill recommended by participants as detailed in Table 3.11, was reported in four different grading levels, these being: good; strong; highly developed; and excellent.

Overall, these findings suggest that the essential personal characteristics of research services staff encompass a range of skills that are at the very least of a ‘good’ quality, if not excellent or highly developed, and include: communication/listening; interpersonal; organisational/time-management; negotiation; and analytical, all of which appeared in some form under each of the three key emerging response categories. Likewise, the abilities to: work as part of a team; problem-solve; work hard but effectively; handle difficult or pressured situations; demonstrate good judgement; and exercise initiative, regularly featured in the participant recommendations. What also presented strongly in the analysis was the need for a ‘sense of humour’ and ‘attention to detail’.

**Career Decision-Making Factors**

Continuing with the aim of developing a profile of participant career characteristics, a number of questions were posed (as outlined in Table 3.1 and detailed below) to explore both decision-making factors that influenced participants in the initial structuring of their career paths, and deciding factors behind their choice of employment within universities and research services.

To the item: **Q18a** ‘Was it always your intention to work in universities?’ 17 per cent of all questionnaire participants indicated they set out with the intention to work in universities, with 83 per cent indicating they had not. Responses from the 141 participants who addressed the follow-up questionnaire item (**Q18b**), of where else participants intended to work (if not in universities), were analysed and coded to 10 separate areas of employment that were drawn from ABS occupational categories (ABS, 2001) (as listed earlier in Figure 3.15). The results depicted in Figure 3.18 show that 39 per cent of participants indicated they either had no fixed plans and/or did not specify in any detail their original career plans.

To the item: **Q20a** ‘Was it always your intention to work in Research Services?’, a mere 12 per cent of all questionnaire participants indicated that it was always their intention to work in Research Services with 88 per cent indicating they had not. Responses from the 140 participants who addressed the follow-up questionnaire item (**Q20b**) of where participants had intended to work (if not in research services) were analysed and grouped into five areas. The results indicated that: 44 per cent of participants had originally intended to work in another area
of university administration; 18 per cent were not following a plan and/or were unsure; 13 per cent indicated they had started out as an academic/academic researcher; 11 per cent indicated they had been opportunistic in their pursuit of employment (that is, they were happy to be employed anywhere); seven per cent had come from a specialist role or other form of profession; and the remainder indicated an array of employment plans and pathways.

![Figure 3.18 Workplace/Career Preferences Other than University Work (n = 141)](image)

The open-ended responses from 190 participants to the follow-up questions regarding the factors which influenced their decisions to work in a university (Q19) and/or research services (Q21), were reviewed in detail via QSR.NVivo 8 and then coded under nine headings as indicated in the following (with associated illustrative examples):

1. ‘Job opportunity’ for example: ‘Job advertised and appealed to me’ (32103);
2. ‘Conditions of employment’ for example: ‘Job security, rates of pay and leave entitlements’ (32114);
3. ‘Work environment’ for example: ‘Structured, fair, professional workplace’ (32235);
4. ‘Desire to obtain a position within a university’ for example: ‘Completed my degree here and always intended to seek work at this university’ (32261);
5. ‘Type of work’ for example: ‘I felt my skills and experience were well-suited to the type of work’ (32075);
6. ‘Lifestyle choice’ for example: ‘Proximity to home – good commuting distance…lifestyle benefits’ (32296);
7. ‘Career progression/advancement’ for example: ‘…good career prospects and variety’ (32191)/‘Opportunity for advancement’ (32295);
8. ‘Peers/work colleagues’ for example: ‘It was a chance to work with highly intelligent/well-qualified people’ (32169); and
9. ‘Contributing to research’ for example: ‘…an altruistic view that research has a very important contribution to make to society’ (31038).

The responses to Q19 and Q21 are contrasted in Figure 3.19, noting that more than one response category could be used for each item. Of particular note in both instances, ‘Job Opportunity’ was a primary factor in a third of participants’ decision-making processes for working in either a university or research services, with the ‘Type of Work’ being the primary factor behind 41 per cent of participants choosing to work in Research Services.

Figure 3.19 Factors Influencing Participant Choice to Work in a University or in Research Services (n = 190)
There was not the material available from these two short answer responses to attempt deeper analyses based on gender and other profile characteristics. However, of note in the response category ‘Conditions of Employment’ female participants were more likely to mention decision making factors such as maternity leave provisions, or work-based childcare, and/or workplace equal employment opportunity (EEO) policies, as opposed to male participants who were more likely to refer to security and/or stability of employment.

**Future Work Intentions**

In contrast to the preceding subsection, participants were asked whether they would still like to be in a research services role five years hence (Q50). The findings indicated that only 39 per cent of the 194 participants indicated they wanted to be in research services for a further five years, with 21 per cent indicating they did not and the balance (40 per cent) being undecided. In the follow-up question (Q50b), participants were asked to indicate one or more (from a list of seven options) future areas of employment or other intended activity post working in research services. The response categories are shown in Figure 3.20 along with occurrence (total counts) presented in percentages.

![Figure 3.20](image-url)

**Figure 3.20** Intended Activity Other than Research Services Work Five Years Post-Survey by Occurrence (n = 81)

Participant responses that specified ‘Other’ were examined and coded to the original seven listed options (as listed in Figure 3.20), with the addition of three emerging response categories of ‘Return to Academia’; ‘Change Professions’; and ‘Change to Part-Time mode’. The findings
from the 65 participants who addressed this item indicated that ‘Retire’ was the most frequent response, followed closely by ‘Move to a Different Area within Universities’.

These results, assuming they proved to have had a level of predictive power (given that at the time of writing five years has lapsed since the questionnaire completion), together with the earlier findings of high staff turnover in this area, plus the seemingly serendipitous nature of RMA employment for a majority of participants, draws attention to the earlier reported OECD recommendations of the need to attract, train and retain university research support staff. Similarly, given over a quarter of participants planned to retire within five years of the questionnaire, these findings also highlight the aging Research Services workforce – a demographic pattern which is reflected in the overall staffing in Australian universities as indicated in the opening chapter.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The participant profile gained through this research indicates that it is a representative sample, by gender, of the identified population of university research services staff. Responses to the first section of the questionnaire provided demographic characteristics. Almost three-quarters of participants were female, typically aged in their 40s. The majority of participants were located in university campuses in major metropolitan areas. None of the male participants were situated in a campus located in a rural area. Over 80 per cent of participants’ primary areas of responsibility were in: Grants and/or Finance Administration; Graduate Studies and/or HDR Student Administration; Information Technology and Research Data Management; or senior managerial roles such as Deputy Directors or Directors. These five core staffing subgroups have been used throughout the study to better explore a number of the study’s findings.

Over 70 per cent were degree qualified or above with male participants being significantly clustered at the higher end of the qualifications spectrum and females significantly overrepresented at the lower end. Sixty per cent of participants were found to be ‘overqualified’ for their current role, with just under a third recommending higher levels of qualifications for their positions than that required by their employer. Further analyses pointed to the finding of increasing RMA workplace credentialism in the form of a rise in the prerequisite education level for participant positions, particularly within five years of the study’s data collection phase (2001-2006). It would appear from this that university research support work is increasing in complexity, a finding paralleled in Shelley’s (2008, 2010b) RMA research.
Over two-thirds of participants were in the HEW 6-7 or HEW 8-9 salary range, with male participants significantly more likely to be at the higher salary levels than females despite the overwhelming female-to-male population ratio. Male participants were more likely to be first appointed at higher salary levels and/or at levels higher than female participants with equivalent or higher levels of education. Further, within five years of initial appointment, 90 per cent of male participants were at HEW 6-7 or above compared to just 54 per cent of females, indicating that male participants move up the salary scale more rapidly.

In contrast to the wider population of university general staff obtained from government higher education staffing statistics, participants had a higher median salary and a higher female-to-male ratio with a similar age demographic. When compared with the profile characteristics of a roughly equivalent study of 120 RMA from English universities conducted around the same time (Shelley, 2008, 2010b), this group proved somewhat older, with more non-university qualified participants and similar levels of postgraduates in percentage terms.

The second section of this chapter reported findings on participant career profile. Research Services appears to be either an expanding area of university administration or one of high staff turnover, given just under two-thirds of participants had worked in research services for five or fewer years. In addition, a large majority of participants had held their current position for five or fewer years. There was also prima facie evidence of a level of staff churn during the period 2003-2006, given a number of participants had moved from other universities to their current university to take up a position in research services.

Just over half of all participants reported a ‘Research Services’ career alignment with a further third aligned to ‘University Administration’, these being the two most dominant areas. Participant characteristics such as gender, salary level, and staffing subgroup appeared to have no effect on career alignment but those participants with HDR qualifications were found significantly more likely to indicate a professional affinity with ‘Research Services’ than those of other levels of qualification.

A wide range of previous areas of employment of participants both within and external to a university were reported. Of note was that half of all participants reported previous research experience and just under one third indicated previous employment as an academic. These findings suggest a large number of participants with ‘mixed identities’ having crossed over the traditional binary divide of academic and administrative domains, as described by Whitchurch (2008c). There also appeared to be gendered differences in the university employment patterns.
of participants, adding to the earlier reported finding of gendered differences in initial appointment levels and the speed within which participants ascend the HEW salary scale.

Participant recommendations on the types of previous experience required for a role in research services were contradictory at times, hinting at the complex nature of research services and the wide range of backgrounds and experiences of staff within this area of university administration. An exploratory look at the personal characteristics recommended by participants for work in Research Services revealed a detailed field of characteristics, traits, skills and abilities, the chief amongst which were: communication, interpersonal, organisational, negotiation and analytical skills. These recommendations were dominated by ‘soft skills’, with the recommended ‘hard skills’ being predominantly computer literacy and to a lesser extent formal/report writing skills.

Key findings regarding career decision-making factors of participants were that only a small percentage initially set out to work in universities and/or research services. Further, the key reasons for working in a university were ‘job opportunity’ and ‘conditions of employment’ whereas for working in a research services area the ‘type of work’ was clearly an attractor followed by ‘job opportunity’. This suggests that serendipity as opposed to structured career planning plays a large part in participants’ decisions to work in universities and the research services area. Lastly, the findings on future work intentions of questionnaire participants highlighted RMA staffing retention as a possible area of concern for university Human Resource Managers generally and Directors of Research Services specifically.

The next chapter presents the findings on staffing nomenclature preferences, providing insight into issues surrounding this group’s occupational and professional identity.
CHAPTER 4
STAFFING NOMENCLATURE PREFERENCES

As previously indicated, current staffing terminology for university staff other than academics is described in the higher education literature as an area of concern. Despite this, no specific empirical work has been devoted to this topic, and until this study the preferred nomenclature preferences of university administration as a group or at a subgroup level had not yet been identified. This chapter reports the findings from the study’s core area of inquiry into the staffing nomenclature preferences of participants.

Drawing on the questionnaire responses, this chapter is presented in two parts: ‘Nomenclature Preferences’ and ‘Perspectives on Nomenclature’. The first identifies participant overall preferences for common forms of nomenclature associated with university administration. It features a range of correlational analyses performed on these preferences according to individual and grouped participant characteristics. The second explores in detail the more extended perspectives on nomenclature preferences, particularly professional identity. The recent adoption of the term ‘Professional staff’ is also discussed in international context and in relation to its recent emergence in Australian universities.

NOMENCLATURE PREFERENCES

Overall Preferences

Questionnaire participants were asked to identify their most (Q29a) and least (Q30a) preferred name for their group (nomenclature preferences), from five response categories comprising terms commonly in use in Australian universities at the time of study. These were: ‘Administrative Staff’; ‘General Staff’; ‘Manager’; ‘University Administrator’; and ‘Non-Academic Staff’; or to offer their own preferred alternative ‘Other’. The resultant questionnaire data were analysed in SPSS using the descriptive statistical functions as indicated.

The total frequency of participant responses as to their most and least preferred nomenclatures are contrasted in Figure 4.1. More than one nomenclature option could be selected, with response categories presented in the order highest to lowest preferred nomenclature. As shown, ‘University Administrator’ emerged as the most preferred title and ‘General Staff’ as the least preferred. ‘Administrative Staff’ was close to an even split in terms of being most and least preferred by a similar number of participants. In each case there was a subgroup of participants that least preferred the same nomenclature item that others most preferred.
For the 37 questionnaire participants who indicated ‘Other’ nomenclature, ten of these indicated a preference for their own individual job title. The next highest preferred nomenclature alternative was the title ‘Professional Staff’ ($n = 9$), followed by terminology that referred to a specialist function ($n = 7$) (for example: Accountant or Lawyer). Of the remaining participants who nominated an alternative form of nomenclature, six chose ‘Research Manager and Administrative Staff’, while ‘University Staff Member’ was preferred by the remaining five participants.

**Preferences by Participant Characteristics**

**Gender**

Table 4.2 presents the interactions between participant gender and most and least preferred nomenclature preferences, ordered by highest to lowest frequency of overall responses. As shown, the responses for the most preferred nomenclature were similar in percentage terms for both male and female participants, with the notable exception of the terms ‘Manager’ and ‘Administrative Staff’. While the percentage of female participants was equally divided on these two options, twice as many males preferred the title of ‘Manager’ to that of ‘Administrative Staff’. However, chi-square tests conducted to test for relationships between preferred nomenclature and participant gender as presented in Table 4.2, indicated no significant differences.
Table 4.2 Relationships between Participant Gender and Nomenclature Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nomenclature Preferences</th>
<th>Participant Gender</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male ((n = 51))</td>
<td>Female ((n = 143))</td>
<td>Total ((n = 194))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOST PREFERRED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administrator</td>
<td>22 (43%)</td>
<td>60 (42%)</td>
<td>82 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>16 (31%)</td>
<td>39 (27%)</td>
<td>55 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>8 (16%)</td>
<td>40 (28%)</td>
<td>48 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>9 (18%)</td>
<td>23 (16%)</td>
<td>32 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic Staff</td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
<td>9 (6%)</td>
<td>13 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEAST PREFERRED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>21 (41%)</td>
<td>57 (40%)</td>
<td>78 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Acadademic Staff</td>
<td>15 (29%)</td>
<td>62 (43%)</td>
<td>77 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>9 (18%)</td>
<td>34 (24%)</td>
<td>43 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administrator</td>
<td>14 (28%)</td>
<td>15 (11%)</td>
<td>29 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>8 (6%)</td>
<td>10 (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was divergence between male and female participants in relation to their least preferred nomenclature, as shown in Table 4.2. Most noticeable is that female participants were more likely to select ‘Non-Academic’ as a least preferred descriptor than male participants, who in turn were more likely to select ‘University Administrator’ as least preferred than female participants. Chi-square tests conducted to test for relationships between least preferred nomenclature and participant gender found the title of ‘University Administrator’ to be the only one of significance \((p = .004)\) (Table 4.2).

The observed versus expected frequencies for this item indicated that male participants were more likely to indicate this terminology as least preferred than were female participants. This finding presents a different complexion to the position taken by males reported in the previous paragraph, of no significant differences by gender for the preference of ‘University Administrator’.

**Salary Level**

Table 4.3 presents an analysis of nomenclature preferences by four salary ranges (‘HEW 2-5’, ‘HEW 6-7’, ‘HEW 8-9’ and ‘HEW 10-10+’), ordered by highest to lowest response frequency of participants in the HEW 2-5 salary range.
Table 4.3 Relationships between Participant Salary Level and Nomenclature Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary Level</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HEW 2-5 ((n = 35))</td>
<td>HEW 6-7 ((n = 71))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>20 (57%)</td>
<td>19 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administrator</td>
<td>10 (29%)</td>
<td>39 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>7 (20%)</td>
<td>15 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic Staff</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>10 (14%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most Preferred

A particular facet of these findings is the absence of participants on the highest salary levels indicating a preference for the nomenclature ‘Administrative Staff’ and conversely, the absence of participant preferences at the most junior salary levels for the title of ‘Manager’, as expected. This apparent salary-related effect is further evidenced with the finding that 81 per cent of all participants who preferred ‘Administrative Staff’ were at HEW 6-7 and below, whilst 82 per cent of all participants who indicated a preference for the title ‘Manager’ were on HEW 8-9 level or above. No participant in the highest salary level (HEW 10-10+) indicated a preference for ‘Non-Academic’, whilst 78 per cent of participants with a preference for ‘University Administrator’ were in the two middle salary ranges.

Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between the four salary ranges and preferred nomenclature. Findings of significance as shown in Table 4.3 revealed the following: ‘Manager’ \((p < .001)\); ‘Administrative Staff’ \((p < .001)\); and ‘University Administrator’ \((p = .007)\). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated a preference for ‘Manager’ by the more senior of the group and for ‘Administrative Staff’ by those at the more junior salary levels. For ‘University Administrator’, the observed versus expected frequencies highlighted that the
preferences for this nomenclature form came from those in the HEW 6-9 middle salary bandwidth.

Two participant salary levels were combined into one (‘Higher’ and ‘Lower’) bracket; and controlled for gender, and a chi-square test conducted. Given low cell counts, a Fisher’s Exact Test was used to analyse the following results pertaining to male participants. The nomenclature preference of ‘Administrative Staff’ for those on the lower salary bandwidth (‘HEW 2-7’) were found to be significant for females \( (\chi^2 = 14.317, \text{df} = 1, p < .001) \) but not significant for male participants of the same salary group \( (p = .237, \text{FET}) \). Further, the nomenclature preference of ‘Manager’ for those on the higher salary bandwidth (‘HEW 8-10+) were found to be significant for females \( (\chi^2 = 44.808, \text{df} = 1, p < .001) \) but not significant for male participants of the same salary band \( (\chi^2 = 1.977, \text{df} = 1, p = .160) \). These findings suggest that male participants were more likely to prefer the title of ‘Manager’ irrespective of salary level, whereas female participants were more likely to indicate a preference for this term once they had reached a position of seniority.

**Least Preferred**

Participant responses for least preferred nomenclature by participant salary level as shown in Table 4.3, indicated that the order of preference was similar across salary ranges but with two exceptions, the latter of which was predictable. First, participants in the HEW 6-7 salary range indicated they would prefer not to be known by the title of ‘General Staff’ over ‘Non-Academic’, which is a reverse trend of the preference order shown by participants in the other salary ranges. Second, no participant from the most senior salary level indicated ‘Manager’ as a least preferred nomenclature. Chi-square tests were conducted for the four salary ranges by least preferred nomenclature, and subsequently, by splitting the four into two salary ranges (‘Higher’ and ‘Lower’) to overcome low cell counts where appropriate. No significant differences were found for either of these tested salary variables by least preferred nomenclature.

**Qualification Level**

Findings for nomenclature preferences by education level (‘No University Qualifications’, ‘Undergraduate’, ‘Postgraduate (Non-Research)’ and ‘Higher Degree Research’ (HDR)) are depicted in Table 4.4, ordered by highest to lowest response frequency of participants with no university qualifications.
### Table 4.4 Relationships between Participant Education Level and Nomenclature Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Education Level</th>
<th>Nomenclature Preferences</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No University Qualification ( (n = 50) )</td>
<td>Undergraduate ( (n = 58) )</td>
<td>Postgraduate (Non-Research) ( (n = 46) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administrator</td>
<td>25 (50%)</td>
<td>27 (47%)</td>
<td>17 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>17 (34%)</td>
<td>19 (33%)</td>
<td>8 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>9 (18%)</td>
<td>13 (22%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic Staff</td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>5 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
<td>18 (31%)</td>
<td>20 (44%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MOST PREFERRED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>22 (44%)</td>
<td>27 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic Staff</td>
<td>18 (36%)</td>
<td>26 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>10 (20%)</td>
<td>12 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administrator</td>
<td>5 (10%)</td>
<td>8 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LEAST PREFERRED**

### Most Preferred

As shown in Table 4.4, participants with undergraduate or no university level qualifications indicated a first and second order preference for the terms ‘University Administrator’ and then ‘Administrative Staff’. Participants with Postgraduate (non-research) or HDR qualifications indicated a preference for ‘Manager’ and then ‘University Administrator’. There was a relatively high preference for the term ‘University Administrator’ across all qualification levels, with the strongest vote coming from participants at the level of undergraduate qualifications and below. The greatest range of preferences occurred for ‘Manager’.

Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between the four education levels and most preferred nomenclature, as reported in Table 4.4. Significant differences were found for the nomenclature of ‘Administrative Staff’ \( (p = .016) \) and ‘Manager’ \( (p < .001) \). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated a greater likelihood for participants with no university qualifications and/or undergraduate degrees to report a preference for ‘Administrative Staff’, as
opposed to those with postgraduate coursework or research degrees. For ‘Manager’, the observed versus expected frequency indicated that those with no university qualifications were much less likely to indicate this nomenclature preference than those with university qualifications. This difference was confirmed in a chi-square test of relationships between preferred nomenclature and two participant education levels (‘No University Qualifications’ and ‘University Qualified’), with a significant finding only for the option of ‘Manager’ ($\chi^2 = 16.566, \text{df} = 1, p < .001$).

These tests were then controlled for gender and repeated. Given low cell counts, a Fisher’s Exact Test was used to analyse the following results pertaining to male participants. The only finding of significance was for female participants with university qualifications who selected the nomenclature of ‘Manager’ ($\chi^2 = 12.148, \text{df} = 1, p < .001$) and for male participants of the same education level ($p = .045$, FET). The observed versus expected frequencies indicated that university qualified participants were more likely to indicate a preference for ‘Manager’, regardless of gender, than were those without university qualifications.

Participant qualification levels were split into two categories, these being ‘Undergraduate and below’ and ‘Postgraduate’. The results indicated significances for the nomenclature preference of ‘Administrative Staff’ ($\chi^2 = 9.657, \text{df} = 1, p = .002$) and for the nomenclature preference of ‘Manager’ ($\chi^2 = 9.513, \text{df} = 1, p = .002$). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that postgraduate participants were more likely to indicate a preference for the term ‘Manager’ and much less likely to indicate a preference for ‘Administrative Staff’, with the reverse finding for those at undergraduate level or below.

These tests were then controlled for gender and repeated. Significance was found for female participants at undergraduate level or below who indicated a preference for ‘Administrative Staff’ ($\chi^2 = 8.558, \text{df} = 1, p = .003$) but not for male participants of the same education level ($p = .702$, FET). Similarly, significance was found for female participants with postgraduate qualifications who indicated a preference for ‘Manager’ ($\chi^2 = 11.271, \text{df} = 1, p = .001$) but not for male participants of the same education level ($\chi^2 = .130, \text{df} = 1, p = .718$). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that female postgraduate participants were more likely to indicate a preference for the term ‘Manager’ and less likely to indicate a preference for ‘Administrative Staff’, with the reverse finding for female participants at undergraduate level or below.
Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between participant qualification levels ('Undergraduate and below' and 'Postgraduate') on preferred nomenclature controlled by salary ('Higher' and 'Lower' – the original four salary levels split into two given low cell counts). Of these, only the nomenclature preference of 'Administrative Staff' was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 3.862, df = 1, p = .049$) for those participants on the 'Lower' salary range of HEW 2-7. These tests were then controlled for gender and repeated. Given the low cell counts, the results using Fisher’s Exact Tests indicated no significant differences for the most preferred nomenclature preferences of male or female participants by the two qualification levels controlled by the two salary levels.

Chi-square tests were also conducted for qualification level ('No University Qualifications' and 'University Qualifications') by most preferred nomenclature controlled for two salary levels ('Higher' and Lower') (the original four salary levels split into two given low cell counts). Of these, only the nomenclature preference of 'Administrative Staff' was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 3.862, df = 1, p = .049$) for those participants on the ‘Lower’ salary range bandwidth of HEW 2-7. These tests were then controlled for gender and repeated. The results using Fisher’s Exact Tests indicated no significant differences for the most preferred nomenclature preferences of male or female participants by the two qualification levels controlled by the two salary levels.

The ‘Administrative Staff’/‘Manager’ nomenclature dichotomy referred to in Chapter 1 features most strongly in these findings on preferred nomenclature. Drawing on the analyses, it can be said that male participants indicated a stronger overall preference for ‘Manager’ than did the females. Participants at the lowest salary levels and with no university qualifications would have a stronger overall preference for ‘Administrative Staff’, regardless of gender, than those at higher salary levels or with university qualifications. Those participants’ at the most senior salary levels indicated no preference for the term ‘Administrative Staff’. The preference for ‘Administrative Staff’ by female participants changed to a preference for ‘Manager’ for those on higher salary levels or with postgraduate qualifications.

**Least Preferred**

As shown in Table 4.4, the preference order of least preferred nomenclature is similar across participant education level with two exceptions. First, a larger proportion of HDR qualified participants indicated they least preferred to being known as a ‘University Administrator’ as opposed to ‘General Staff’. Second, ‘General Staff’ and ‘Administrative Staff’ shared equal third placing for this response category for HDR qualified participants – a preference order at odds with the other qualification subgroups.
Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between the four education levels and least preferred nomenclature. The only significant difference found, as highlighted in Table 4.4, was for the nomenclature preference of ‘University Administrator’ \( (p = .004) \). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that more than twice the expected numbers of HDR qualified participants reported they least preferred this title – a different response pattern to that of participants at other qualification levels.

To explore these relationships further, a number of chi-square tests were conducted on least preferred nomenclature using different qualification factors. First, in the chi-square test involving ‘Undergraduate and below’ and ‘Postgraduate’ education factors, there were no significant findings. Second, when the four qualification levels were changed into two (‘No University Qualifications’ and ‘University Qualifications’) and a chi-square test conducted again, there were no significant findings. Third and last, the chi-square test with two qualification levels being ‘HDR’ and ‘All other Qualification Levels (including no university qualifications)’ did indicate significance \( (\chi^2 = 12.209, \text{df} = 1, p < .001) \). Collectively, these analyses provide the finding that of all four qualification levels, it is participants with HDR qualifications that were statistically more likely to indicate ‘University Administrator’ as a least preferred form of nomenclature.

**Career Alignment**

In the study’s findings on participant career profile, as discussed in Chapter 3, it was revealed that the majority of participants professionally identified with either a career in ‘Research Services’ (RS) \( (n = 103) \) or ‘University Administration’ (UA) \( (n = 65) \)\(^\text{13}\). The nomenclature preferences of participants who indicated a professional alignment with one of these two dominant career paths are presented in Table 4.5, ordered by highest to lowest response frequency of those participants with an RS alignment.

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\(^{13}\) Relevant to this section is the context provided in Chapter 3 which indicated that participant career alignment did not appear to have a gendered bias nor did participant salary levels have a significant effect on the selection of an RS or UA career path. Further it was found that those participants with HDR qualifications were significantly more likely to have indicated an RS career path.
Table 4.5 Relationships between Participant Career Alignment and Nomenclature Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nomenclature Preferences</th>
<th>Participant Career Alignment</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research Services $(n = 103)$</td>
<td>University Administration $(n = 65)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOST PREFERRED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administrator</td>
<td>45 (44%)</td>
<td>30 (46%)</td>
<td>.098 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>33 (32%)</td>
<td>13 (20%)</td>
<td>2.905 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>20 (19%)</td>
<td>25 (39%)</td>
<td>7.370 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>17 (17%)</td>
<td>9 (14%)</td>
<td>.215 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic Staff</td>
<td>7 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>Cell count &lt;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAST PREFERRED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>45 (44%)</td>
<td>24 (37%)</td>
<td>.754 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic Staff</td>
<td>40 (39%)</td>
<td>30 (46%)</td>
<td>.878 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>25 (24%)</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
<td>5.991 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administrator</td>
<td>16 (16%)</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
<td>1.391 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
<td>Cell count &lt;5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most Preferred

As shown, the preference order of the most preferred nomenclature for the two career alignment subgroups was similar, with a noteworthy exception. Participants with an RS career alignment indicated they preferred to be called ‘Manager’ over ‘Administrative Staff’ (19 per cent), whilst the reverse order appears for those with a UA career alignment. Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between participant career alignment and most preferred nomenclature. The only finding of significance as indicated in Table 4.5, was for the nomenclature preference of ‘Administrative Staff’ ($p = .007$). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that participants with an RS career alignment were less likely to indicate a preference for this term, than were those with a UA career alignment. Significance did not appear in chi-square tests involving the two dominant career alignments by most preferred nomenclature when controlled for gender.

Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between participant career alignment and preferred nomenclature controlled by the four levels of education (‘No University Qualifications’, ‘Undergraduate’, ‘Postgraduate (Non-Research)’ and ‘HDR’). The only nomenclature found to be of significance was the preference for ‘Administrative Staff’
115

\( \chi^2 = 7.697, \text{df} = 1, p = .006 \). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that undergraduate participants with a UA career alignment were more likely to indicate a preference for ‘Administrative Staff’, than were undergraduate participants with an RS career alignment.

When the chi-square test was repeated with the added layer of gender, the preference for ‘Administrative Staff’ for those participants at the undergraduate level was found to be significant for female participants \( \chi^2 = 4.884, \text{df} = 1, p = .027 \) but not for male participants \( p = .109, \text{FET} \). In other words, female participants with undergraduate qualifications who had indicated a UA career path, were significantly more likely to select being called ‘Administrative Staff’ than males at the same level of qualification or male and female participants at any other level of qualification with either an RS or UA career alignment.

**Least Preferred**

As indicated in Table 4.5, the preference order of the least preferred nomenclatures for the two career alignment subgroups differed somewhat. Participants with an RS career alignment indicated they did not prefer the nomenclature of ‘General Staff’ over ‘Non Academic’, whilst the reverse order appeared for those with a UA career alignment. A larger percentage of participants with an RS career alignment indicated ‘Administrative Staff’ as a least preferred nomenclature than appeared for UA participants.

Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between the two participant career alignments (‘RS’ and ‘UA’) and least preferred nomenclature, the results of which are reported in Table 4.5. The only significant difference found was for the nomenclature of ‘Administrative Staff’ \( p = .014 \). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that participants with an RS career alignment were more likely to indicate that ‘Administrative Staff’ was a least preferred form of nomenclature, than were undergraduate participants with an UA career alignment. When these chi-square tests were controlled for gender and repeated, a significant finding was found for male \( p = .043, \text{FET} \) (using a Fisher’s Exact Test given low cell counts) but not for female participants \( \chi^2 = 2.676, \text{df} = 1, p = .102 \).

This analysis suggests that male participants with an RS career alignment were more likely to select ‘Administrative Staff’ as a least preferred nomenclature, than male participants with a UA career alignment or females with either an RS or UA career alignment. No significant effect was found in the chi-square tests on least preferred nomenclature preferences by career
alignment, controlled for the four levels of participant education (‘No University Qualifications’, ‘Undergraduate’, ‘Postgraduate (Non-Research)’ and ‘HDR’).

**Staffing Subgroup**

The nomenclature preferences were viewed by five of the eight RMA staffing subgroups identified in the study and discussed in Chapter 3. Findings for nomenclature preferences by the five main staffing subgroups ($n = 162$) (‘Deputy Director/Director’, ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’, ‘RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)’, ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ and ‘RMA (Ethics)’) are depicted in Table 4.6, ordered by highest to lowest response frequency of participants who are ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Staffing Subgroup</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Director/ Director ($n = 20$)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Grants/ Finance) ($n = 53$)</td>
<td>14 (26%)</td>
<td>7 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Grad Studies/ Grad Student) ($n = 37$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Data/IT Systems) ($n = 31$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Ethics) ($n = 21$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manager</strong></td>
<td>15 (75%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Administrator</strong></td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>27 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Staff</strong></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>14 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Staff</strong></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>8 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Academic Staff</strong></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOST PREFERRED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Least Preferred</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manager</strong></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 The remaining three RMA staffing subgroups were not included given they are combinations of smaller staffing subgroups and are not homogenous groupings like the first five, thereby providing possible complicating factors when analysing nomenclature preferences.
Most Preferred

As shown in Table 4.6, ‘Manager’ was the most preferred title for ‘Directors/Deputy Directors’ whilst the title of ‘General Staff’ was preferred by ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’: the latter reflecting the reduced administrative focus of this technical subgroup compared to the remaining staffing subgroups, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter. All other staffing subgroups indicated ‘University Administrator’ as the most preferred title.

Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between preferred nomenclature and participant staffing subgroups: ‘Five Staffing Subgroups’. Significant findings were revealed for the nomenclature of ‘Administrative Staff’ \((p = .038)\) and ‘Manager’ \((p < .001)\) (Table 4.6). Observed versus expected frequencies highlighted the dominance of the ‘Manager’ nomenclature preference and complete absence of the preference of ‘Administrative Staff’ for ‘Deputy Director/Director’ participants, both findings of which are at odds with the preference results for the same two titles by the other staffing subgroups. Chi-square tests were not performed on the nomenclatures of ‘General Staff’ and ‘Non-Academic’ staff due to low cell counts. Low cell counts also prevented these chi-square tests from being repeated with the added control of gender.

Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between nomenclature preferences and each of the five staffing subgroups. This analysis, in addition to the combined staffing subgroup analyses reported above, was done to avoid low cell counts as it provided a 2 x 2 table design, thereby allowing a Fisher’s Exact Test to be used where appropriate. In these tests, the high preference response for the nomenclature of ‘Manager’ by ‘Deputy Director/Director’ was found to be significant when compared to the combined preferences of the other four staffing subgroups \(\chi^2 = 23.430, \text{df} = 1, p < .001\). Further, the absence of any participants in the staffing subgroup of ‘Deputy Director/Director’ indicating a preference for the nomenclatures of ‘General Staff’ \(\chi^2 = 4.362, \text{df} = 1, p = .046\) or ‘Administrative Staff’ \(\chi^2 = 7.731, \text{df} = 1, p = .005\) was found to be significant when compared to the preferences of the other four main staffing subgroups combined.

The increased preference for the nomenclature of ‘General Staff’ by ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ was found to be significant over the preferences of the other four staffing subgroups combined \((p < .001, \text{FET})\). Similarly, an increased preference for the nomenclature of ‘Administrative Staff’ by ‘RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)’ was found to be significant over the preferences of the other four staffing subgroups \(\chi^2 = 3.982, \text{df} = 1, p = .046\). For the remaining staffing subgroups, no significant results appeared in the chi-square tests for the
nomenclature preferences of ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’ or ‘RMA (Ethics)’ over the respective four remaining staffing subgroups. Low cell counts prevented these chi-square tests from being repeated with the added control of gender.

This analysis regarding ‘Deputy Director/Director’ nomenclature preferences supports earlier findings of the most senior of the studied group having a high preference for ‘Manager’, and a complete absence of preference for ‘Administrative Staff’. Further, the technical/administrative binary divide is highlighted here with two ‘administrative’ staffing subgroups reporting a higher preference for ‘Administrative Staff’, whilst conversely the one ‘technical’ staffing subgroup reported a higher preference for ‘General Staff’.

**Least Preferred**

Across four of the five main staffing subgroups, the nomenclature options of ‘General Staff’ and ‘Non-Academic’ were the two least preferred titles, as shown in Table 4.6. A different response pattern was indicated for the remaining staffing group of ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’, with less differentiation of that subgroup’s preferences for all but the nomenclature option of ‘Manager’, re-affirming this group’s reduced identification with administrative activities.

Chi-square tests conducted to test for relationships between the least preferred nomenclatures by the combined set of ‘Five Staffing subgroups’ indicated no significant findings, as shown in Table 4.6. Chi-square tests were also conducted to test for relationships between least preferred nomenclature and the five staffing subgroups individually. This analysis, in addition to the ‘Five Staffing Subgroup’ analyses reported above, was done to avoid low cell counts as it provided a 2 x 2 table design, thereby allowing a Fisher’s Exact Test to be used where appropriate. The only finding of significance was for ‘University Administrator’; a nomenclature preference which ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ participants indicated they were more likely to indicate as a least preferred title than participants from the other four main staffing subgroups combined ($\chi^2 = 6.926, df = 1, p = .018$).

**Length-of-Service**

To see if it was a significant factor in determining participant nomenclature preferences, length-of-service (LOS) in universities was examined using four time-periods: ‘0-5 years’; ‘6-10 years’; ‘11-15 years’; and ‘16-20+ years’. The findings as presented in Table 4.7 are ordered by highest to lowest response frequency of those participants with ‘0-5 years’ of university service.
Most Preferred

As shown in Table 4.7, participants with ‘11-15 years’ university service indicated much less preference for ‘Administrative Staff’ and to a lesser extent ‘General Staff’, than any of the other LOS groupings. Also noticeable was the higher level of preference for the term ‘General Staff’ for those staff who have been employed in the university sector for five years or less, and for the term ‘Manager’ by those participants with 16 or more years of university service.

Table 4.7 Relationships between Participant Length-of-Service in Universities and Nomenclature Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nomenclature Preferences</th>
<th>Length of Service in Universities</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-5 yrs</td>
<td>6-10 yrs</td>
<td>11-15 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Administrator</strong></td>
<td>(n = 59)</td>
<td>(n = 55)</td>
<td>(n = 30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOST PREFERRED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administrator</td>
<td>18 (31%)</td>
<td>24 (44%)</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>17 (29%)</td>
<td>18 (33%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>15 (25%)</td>
<td>8 (15%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>13 (22%)</td>
<td>15 (27%)</td>
<td>8 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic Staff</td>
<td>6 (10%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAST PREFERRED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>23 (39%)</td>
<td>24 (44%)</td>
<td>14 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic Staff</td>
<td>22 (37%)</td>
<td>17 (31%)</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>9 (15%)</td>
<td>15 (27%)</td>
<td>10 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administrator</td>
<td>14 (24%)</td>
<td>5 (9%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between the most preferred nomenclature and the four LOS time-periods combined. As reported in Table 4.7, only the nomenclature preference of ‘Administrative Staff’ was found to be of significance (\( p = .020 \)). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that participants with ‘11-15 years’ LOS in universities, and to a lesser extent those with ‘6-10 years’, were less likely to indicate a preference for this nomenclature form than were participants from the remaining two LOS time-periods. All other nomenclature preferences were not significant by the combined LOS variable, putting aside the nomenclatures of ‘Non-Academic’ and ‘General Staff’ which
displayed low cell counts, thus preventing analysis. Low cell counts also prevented these chi-square tests from being repeated with the added control of gender.

Chi-square tests conducted to test for relationships between nomenclature preferences of participants with LOS of 10 or fewer years in universities versus those with 11 or more years, reported significant findings for the nomenclature ‘Administrative Staff’ ($\chi^2 = 5.273$, df = 1, $p = .022$) only. Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that participants with 10 years or less LOS in universities were more likely to indicate a preference for ‘Administrative Staff’, than those with 11 or more years of service. When this chi-square test was then controlled for gender and repeated, significance only appeared for female participants ($\chi^2 = 4.767$, df = 1, $p = .029$). Chi-square tests conducted to test for relationships between nomenclature preferences of participants with LOS of five or fewer years in universities versus those with six or more years, reported no significant findings.

Chi-square tests conducted to test for relationships between nomenclature preferences and the two factor LOS variable (‘10 years or less’; ‘11 years or more’) controlled for education level (‘No University Qualifications’, ‘University Qualifications’), were found to be significant for the nomenclature ‘Administrative Staff’ for those participants with university qualifications only ($\chi^2 = 5.558$, df = 1, $p = .018$). When an additional control layer of gender was added and the chi-square test repeated, significance for the nomenclature of ‘Administrative Staff’ was found for female participants who were university qualified only ($\chi^2 = 5.868$, df = 1, $p = .015$). Reviewing the differences between observed and expected frequencies, it appears from this finding that university qualified female participants with 10 years or less service in universities were significantly more likely to indicate a preference for the term ‘Administrative Staff’, than university qualified female participants with 11 years or more university service.

### Least Preferred

Table 4.7 reports the relationships between least preferred nomenclature and participant LOS in universities. As shown, the nomenclature of ‘General Staff’ was the least preferred title for participants from three of the four LOS groups (‘0-5 years’, ‘6-10 years’ and ‘11-15 years’). An equal number of participants with ‘11-15 years’ nomenclatures indicated that ‘Administrative Staff’ and ‘Non-Academic’ were least preferred nomenclatures – a finding at odds with the response patterns of the other LOS groups. Also of note is the higher percentage of those new to universities (‘0-5 years’) compared to the other LOS groups, indicating that ‘University Administrator’ was a least preferred nomenclature.
Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between the least preferred nomenclatures by the four LOS time-periods combined, the results of which are shown in Table 4.7. Significant findings were only found for the nomenclature of ‘Non-Academic’ ($p = .046$). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that participants with ‘16-20+ years’ of service were more likely to indicate ‘Non-Academic’ as their least preferred nomenclature, than participants in the other three time-periods. All other nomenclature preferences were not significant by the combined LOS variable, putting aside the nomenclatures of ‘University Administrator’ and ‘Manager’ which displayed low cell counts, thus preventing analysis.

Chi-square tests were also conducted to test for relationships between least preferred nomenclature and the four individual time-periods. This analysis, in addition to the combined LOS time-period analyses reported above, was done to avoid low cell counts by providing a design of 2 x 2 tables, thereby allowing a Fisher’s Exact Test to be used where appropriate. The least preferred nomenclature of ‘Non Academic’ was found to be significant when using the combination of ‘16-20+ years’ versus ‘All other time-periods’ ($\chi^2 = 7.485$, df = 1, $p = .006$). When controlled for gender, ‘Non-Academic’ was found significant for female participants only ($\chi^2 = 5.270$, df = 1, $p = .022$). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that female participants with 16 or more years of university service were more likely to indicate ‘Non-Academic’ as a least preferred nomenclature, than female participants with 15 years or less university service.

In chi-square tests conducted to examine the effects on participant responses regarding least preferred nomenclature using the LOS time-periods of ‘5 years or less’ and ‘6 years or more’, only the nomenclature of ‘University Administrator’ was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 5.141$, df = 1, $p = .023$). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that those participants with five years or less LOS were more likely to indicate ‘University Administrator’ as a least preferred nomenclature, than those with longer LOS in universities. In follow-up chi-square tests controlled for gender there were no significant findings. Further, when chi-square tests were conducted on least preferred nomenclature using the combination of ‘10 years or less’ versus ’11 years or more’ LOS in universities, there appeared no significance for any least preferred nomenclature, including ‘University Administrator’. It would appear from this particular analysis that participants new to the university sector were significantly more likely to indicate ‘University Administrator’ as a least preferred nomenclature, than those with more than five years’ service in universities.
Anecdotal evidence from Bacon (2009) indicated that several specialist professionals new to the UK Higher Education (HE) sector had expressed the belief that the longer they remained in the university sector: the less attachment they would have to their specialist profession; the less likely they would be able to be employed outside the HE sector; and the greater would be their identification with the HE sector. The premise being that professional identity shifts may occur as a function of length of service in universities (Bacon, 2009). In light of the findings from this study that length-of-service had some effect on participant preference or otherwise for the nomenclature of ‘University Administrator’, it would appear that Bacon’s premise is supported.

**University Group**

Nomenclature preferences of participants can be analysed by university group, namely Go8, ATN, IRU, REG and NGU. Most questionnaire participants (88 per cent) identified which university group they belonged to as detailed in the study’s compositional profile in Chapter 2, with their nomenclature preferences depicted in Table 4.8. The presented data is ordered by highest to lowest response frequency of those participants located within a Go8 university.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant University Group</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nomenclature Preferences</td>
<td>Go8 (n = 67)</td>
<td>ATN (n = 37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOST PREFERRED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administrator</td>
<td>29 (43%)</td>
<td>18 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>24 (36%)</td>
<td>8 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>13 (19%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>11 (16%)</td>
<td>9 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic Staff</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAST PREFERRED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic Staff</td>
<td>22 (33%)</td>
<td>12 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>27 (40%)</td>
<td>20 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>12 (18%)</td>
<td>9 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administrator</td>
<td>14 (21%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Most Preferred**

What is significant here is the very different response pattern for each of the five university groupings. For example, similar numbers of REG participants have indicated a preference for first four nomenclature options, with no votes for ‘Non-Academic’. Whereas the NGU and ATN participants show similar preference levels in percentage terms for ‘University Administrator’ and ‘Non-Academic’, but differing levels of response for the remaining nomenclatures. The Go8 group indicated little preference for the title of ‘Administrative Staff’, which is noticeably at odds with the responses of the other university groups in percentage terms. Chi-square tests conducted to test for relationships between preferred nomenclature and participant University group were either not found to be significant and/or analyses were hampered by low cell counts as reported in Table 4.8.

**Least Preferred**

The least preferred response patterns across the five university groupings are reasonably similar in preference order as shown in Table 4.8. Of note is that more than half of the ATN participant group indicated that ‘General Staff’ was a least preferred nomenclature, whilst none from this group indicated ‘Manager’ as least preferred. Also of note was the higher percentage of NGU participants indicating ‘Administrative Staff’ to be a least preferred nomenclature compared to the other university groupings. Chi-square tests conducted to test for relationships between least preferred nomenclature and participant University group were either not found to be significant and/or analyses were hampered by low cell counts as reported in Table 4.8.

**PERSPECTIVES ON NOMENCLATURE**

In addition to nominating nomenclature preferences, participants were asked to explain them in an open-ended questionnaire item (Q29b and Q30b). The frequency of responses by nomenclature options is illustrated in Figure 4.9. The graph is presented by highest to lowest preferred nomenclature. The responses regarding nomenclature preferences were entered into *QSR.NVivo 8* and analysed for common categories. Once the response categories were established, the data were coded to these categories and initially analysed by frequency, noting that more than one reason for the nomenclature option may have been given. What follows is an examination of these emerging response categories, which illustrate a range of perspectives on the five nomenclatures. Participant quotations are used to exemplify the category of response.
Figure 4.9 Response Frequencies Regarding Reasons for Nomenclature Choices

**University Administrator**

*Most Preferred*

Figure 4.9 indicated that the greatest frequency of open-ended responses outlining participants’ choice of preferred nomenclature was for ‘University Administrator’. Of the 81 responses received in support of this choice, 54 per cent reported that it was an appropriate role descriptor. In turn, 19 per cent of participants indicated it was one of the better options available, while 15 per cent perceived it provided a level of credibility or recognition. For example:

> Our role is so diverse/challenging and we are required to be abreast of various DEST and other government reporting obligations, etc. so I see us as more than General or Administrative staff. We need to be recognised as more (32321).

A further 10 per cent of participants indicated that it was a term that had application outside the sector:

> It is the most intelligible way of describing myself to people who do not work in the university sector (31179).

There were a smaller number of responses (7 per cent) indicating that this nomenclature option signaled a relationship between the title holder and their institution in a positive sense:

> …seems to convey the right message of the importance to the university of the position (32247).
There is a literature which indicates university staff who are not classified as academics are more likely to identify with the collective or the university/institution as a whole (Lewis & Altbach, 1996), or in their specialisms (Bacon, 2009). This is in contrast to academics who would tend to identify with their discipline and apply an individual rather than collective focus (Bacon, 2009; Winter, 2009). The remaining participants with a preference for ‘University Administrator’ indicated that this nomenclature avoided the unwanted dichotomy of non-academic/academic – a feature of other descriptors.

University Administrator holds a higher impact than the other alternatives and is not a negative of an academic (32245).

**Least Preferred**

Conversely, 30 participants provided a response to their selection of ‘University Administrator’ as a least preferred nomenclature (Figure 4.9). Of these, 27 per cent indicated the term was an inadequate or inappropriate role descriptor, highlighting the same sorts of concerns raised in the use of the term ‘Administrative Staff’ as described below and which can be aptly summed up by the following comment:

Within universities ‘administrator’ is rarely a positive term (32225).

A further 23 percent of participants indicated that the term devalued the role undertaken:

Use of term ‘administrator’ implies that work is routine and does not require much thought! (32256).

Twenty per cent of participants indicated this form of nomenclature was problematic given the inclusion of ‘University’ in the title, albeit for varying reasons including:

University administrator sounds like you look after the whole university (32199).

I prefer to be recognised by my profession instead of the industry I am currently working in (32237).

The small remaining handful duplicated responses highlighted under other nomenclature options, as discussed in the following sections where appropriate.
Manager

Most Preferred

Of the 54 responses indicating why ‘Manager’ was a preferred nomenclature option (Figure 4.9), 35 per cent of participants perceived this title as an appropriate role descriptor for those in a managerial role, providing clarity of their function and/or reflecting their skills, knowledge and level of experience. Equally, this title was perceived to be the most recognisable to an external body, in particular, bestowing a level of status and credibility to the title holder (35 per cent of participants). For 13 per cent of participants ‘Manager’ was perceived as the best or better option, given the ‘baggage’ of the remaining nomenclature options. Examples include:

Most people have a reasonable idea of the role and level of responsibility of a manager. The other options can demean the role. ‘Administrator’ and ‘administrative’ are often used for more junior roles like clerical assistant and secretary nowadays (32075).

I manage high level processes therefore Manager seems appropriate and at my HEW level management is what I do even though the word Manager is not in my title. I avoid terms such as general staff and non-academic staff as I believe there is a derogatory language connotation associated with these terms as indicating not academic/not intellectual. I believe I use a very similar skill set to many academics in terms of creativity, analysis and critical thinking so I do not wish to be seen as an administrator with all the community and societal meaning that term implies (32200).

There were also comments that ‘Manager’ reflected the increasing complexity and diversity of the functions undertaken (11 per cent of participants) and indicated the level of accountability and responsibility of the title holder (9 per cent of participants).

Least Preferred

Of the 10 participants who provided a reason for the choice of ‘Manager’ (Figure 4.9) as a least preferred nomenclature option, all indicated it was an inappropriate title for them as they were not currently in a managerial role.

Apart from the earlier reported findings in the first part of the chapter on the ‘Administrative Staff’/’Manager’ nomenclature dichotomy and the issues raised via the extended perspectives on the nomenclature of ‘Manager’ provided in this section, one of study’s interview participants provided a perspective on the apparent unease between the use of the title ‘Administrator’ (or ‘Administrative’) and ‘Manager’ thus:
…administrator goes back to defining what we were… this reactive, inert group who actually just followed up and chased final reports for funding agencies. Administration is part of us, part of what we do and …management defines a far more proactive, value-adding role that we should be doing. So in some sense we have actually moved from administrator to manager as a group (1103).

In a similar vein, Whitchurch found that Australian senior university administrators were more likely to refer to themselves as ‘managers’ without ‘…modulating this via the use of the term “administration”’…’, unlike their peers in the UK (2009b, p. 411). She further made the observation that the term ‘administration’ was valued in the USA, as it was seen to have status over ‘management’ given its association with ‘…institutional policy and governance…’ (Whitchurch, 2009b, p. 411). Her findings shed light on international variation and usage of Research Manager and Administrator terminology.

**Administrative Staff**

*Most Preferred*

As depicted in Figure 4.9, unlike the other dominant nomenclature options which either reported a most favoured or least favoured position by a majority of the participants, this title received an almost equal number of positive and negative responses to it. Thirty (65 per cent) of the 46 participants who provided reasons for their preference for this title indicated that ‘Administrative Staff’ was an appropriate descriptor of their role or functions. Following the earlier findings of relationships between participant salary level and nomenclature preferences as reported in the first part of this chapter, of these 30 participants, all but two were at HEW 6-7 or below. Thirteen per cent of the 46 participants indicated that although this title was a preferred one the issue of nomenclature did not matter to them personally or it was not as important. For example:

I work in the administrative area of the university. I do not have strong feelings about how I am classified as it does not impinge on my daily work or how my work is recognised (32164).

The same number of participants (13 per cent) indicated that being called ‘Administrative Staff” was better than the alternatives of ‘Non-Academic’ or ‘General Staff’.
Least Preferred

Of the 41 negative responses received for this item, the major theme (expressed in roughly half of the responses) was that the term ‘Administrative Staff’ was an inadequate role descriptor as it downplayed the role undertaken by the participant and/or their skill level.

Language is critical; to generate/indicate respect appropriate and accurate names should be used. Support staff or admin staff or general staff does not reflect the highly proactive, critical and professional services we provide to the University (32077).

In a related response category, 22 per cent of participants perceived that the title of ‘Administrative Staff’ would be interpreted by others to mean that the title holder was either a Personal Assistant or secretary, for example:

…because then academics just think we are their secretaries and ring with irrelevant questions!! (32223).

A further response category capturing 20 per cent of participants indicated that being known as an ‘Administrative Staff’ member meant that your role would not be well regarded by academic staff:

The attitude to some administrative people when you are not an academic working at a University is that your opinion will not be considered let alone why should they bother to speak with you (32220).

Analogous to these findings, Whitchurch in her analysis of terminology found that:

… “administration” has tended to become devalued in that it is often used to refer to procedural, and even clerical, tasks… (2009b, p. 411).

General Staff

Most Preferred

As shown in Figure 4.9, thirty responses were received indicating the reasons why the nomenclature option of ‘General Staff’ was preferred. A third of these indicated that it was an appropriate title for them and/or it was one of the better nomenclature options given the alternatives. Thirty per cent of participants indicated that the term was well known, as it is enshrined in Award Classifications/Staffing Agreements at the time of study and/or it was a
well understood term. The remaining participants indicated they were not that concerned about nomenclature.

**Least Preferred**
For the negative, 77 participants provided reasons as to why this was one of their least preferred options. Of these, 46 per cent said that the term devalued their work role or their skills and experience level, with 36 per cent indicating the term was too generic or too broad and therefore meaningless:

General describes someone who does perhaps a bit of everything and nothing terribly advanced… (31036).

General staff member could be interpreted as being anyone from a high-level administrator to a cleaner (32041).

General staff is used to apply to catering staff, plumbers, secretaries and project managers. Each area has its own qualifications and should be respected as such – without being labelled general as though we are all some sort of sub-class (32184).

The remaining participants appraised the term as quite old fashioned and dated terminology or one which continued to entrench the aforementioned ‘us and them’ mentality:

In our university this descriptor has been given quite a demeaning and derogatory association by academic members of staff (32040).

Avoid academic/slave mentality – general does not specify the nature of my work and sometimes means I can be asked to undertake any menial task regardless of skills! (32074).

At the time of the data collection, the term ‘General Staff’ was in use by Australian universities to describe all university staff other than academics. It is also a descriptive term currently in use in Australian government statistics and policy documentation. The sector-wide initial adoption of this term into the Australian HE lexicon occurred in 1996, given it was seen to be more preferable to the term of ‘Non-Academic’ (Dobson & Conway, 2003). However, its suitability is now being challenged as evidenced by its decreasing use in Australian universities in lieu of the term ‘Professional Staff’, as discussed later in the chapter. The study’s findings reported here on ‘General Staff’ point to the issues behind the diminishing support for this nomenclature.
**Non-Academic**

*Most Preferred*

As shown in Figure 4.9, ‘Non-Academic’ received the smallest amount of positive responses of the five nomenclature choices. Of the 11 responses received in the affirmative, the predominant reasons given for this nomenclature being preferred was that the term was accurate, as in the participants were not academic.

*Least Preferred*

However, the overwhelming reaction to this term was negative, with 76 participants indicating why they had chosen ‘Non-Academic’ as a least preferred nomenclature option. Of these, 34 per cent indicated they felt that being labeled as ‘Non-Academic’ was demeaning, indicating a subservient or inferior position:

- It sounds demeaning and second class. It sounds as if I have no skills or knowledge (32103).

- That term, identifies me as belonging to a group who DO NOT possess something, as if we are an inferior ‘other’ group (32122).

The next largest majority of responses (32 per cent) indicated that it was not appropriate to be labelled by a negative term:

- Non-academic implies a negative rather than focusing on the positives of what I do (32164).

Another response category (22 per cent of participants) indicated that the term divided staff, continuing the ‘us and them’ mentality of academic versus ‘other’ as it ‘…seems to accentuate the divide between academics and general staff’ (32259). Examples include:

- I do not think each individual role needs to be quarantined by where it fits in the organisation structure. I understand that academics have different roles to non-academics but we all work towards excellence and I do not agree that there needs to be two distinct groups of employees (32025).

- What we do is very closely aligned to academic matters it sounds exclusive as if academic is the benchmark and others fall short (32284).
Continuing in the same response category but with perspectives specific to the researcher/research support nexus:

I see my job as being as valuable in some ways as that of an academic. To become a good research administrator requires specialisation… simply being labelled non-academic sets my job up as a subservient one (32018).

These titles (General and Non-Academic) occur to me as a division between the university business areas. I believe Research Services is a critical collegial activity. When effective, it is a team effort between researchers and research service staff where both parties acknowledge the strengths and different skills which together bring about an excellent outcome. However, the research always remains the work of the academic. My services are facilitation for a successful result (32059).

The remaining participants (nine per cent) indicated that the term was too broad:

It is a ‘label’ that simply distinguishes academic from general staff without giving any indication of what area a person works in or what they do (32276).

The conflict expressed for this nomenclature option is also reflected in the research findings by Allen-Collinson (2006) as referred to in Chapter 1, involving an exploratory demographic study (n = 77) and follow up interviews with 27 UK university RMA drawn from 19 institutions, about role, identity, status and work boundaries. Her findings pointed to a problematic occupational identity of the ‘non-academic’ or ‘other’, the origin of which she attributes to the unequal power relations in academia (Dobson & Conway, 2003). Despite the finding that there were a number of research administrators in the study found to have equivalent or higher qualifications than their academic colleagues, Allen-Collinson found that this negative terminology:

…was felt to denigrate and deny research administrators’ specialist skills and subject expertise and to result in a lack of respect for their abilities… (2006, p.272).

**Professional Staff**

During the data-collection phase of this study 2006-2007, the term ‘Professional Staff’ was only just beginning to appear in the vernacular of Australian universities (Sebalj, et al., 2012a). Yet by December 2010 in a review of university websites by the author, the term had risen to
prominence in the staffing lexicon of 19 of the 39 Australian universities\textsuperscript{15}. According to this website review, the manner in which this term has been adopted differed across the sector in form and approach. For instance, one Go8 university described all staff, other than academics, as ‘Professional Staff’; having enshrined this new terminology in its associated 2010 staffing enterprise agreement. Other universities used the term interchangeably with ‘General Staff’, or in a multi-streamed format such as ‘Professional/Administrative/Technical’. Further, in one university there appeared to have been a deliberate top-down approach of utilising the term ‘Professional Staff’ as part of rebadging exercises, with an emphasis on staff professionalism. Alternatively a more bottom-up approach was apparent in other universities where the term ‘Professional staff’ appeared in policy libraries or in faculty staffing contact lists for example, and yet had not appeared in the wider university lexicon.

In the current study, one participant noted the emergence of the nomenclature of ‘Professional Staff’:

The term professional is becoming the more widely accepted terminology in the sector and was commented on in the Higher Education Supplement of the Australian newspaper not so long ago. This terminology is appropriate to the type of work and qualifications required for this type of employment and it does not have the negative implications of the term ‘General’… (32123).

There was also a small group of participants who referred to this nomenclature in their open ended-responses. For example, one participant said:

…we are classed as ‘Professional Staff” which is great! (32241).

Versus an opposing opinion of a participant commenting on their preference for the term ‘General Staff”:

Seems general (!) and is already a well-known term. My university has just changed this term to ’professional staff” which seems ridiculous and nobody really understands that ’professional is the same as ‘general’ (32051).

\textsuperscript{15} A follow-up review undertaken in April 2013 by the author revealed that 28 of the 39 Australian Universities were utilising the term of ’Professional Staff”, although there are still marked differences in the manner in which it is being adopted across the sector.
The appearance of the ‘Professional staff’ nomenclature in the Australian HE landscape has arguably been fostered by grassroots activism, aided in particular by the proactive support of ATEM and its membership. ATEM formally agreed in December 2009 to adopt the term of ‘Professional staff’ to describe their member constituents and to subsequently mount comprehensive lobbying action aimed at influencing the Australian federal government to similarly adopt the term as a replacement for the current lexicon of: ‘General’; ‘Non-Academic’; and ‘Other’ staff (ATEM Secretariat, 2009). Correspondingly, the term ‘Professional Staff’ also emerged in the UK HE sector, being a descriptor which first appeared in the form of ‘Professional Services Staff’ according to Whitchurch (2004), in comments she attributed to Lambert in his 2003 UK review of Business and University Collaboration. In this review Lambert stated that:

…some institutions are breaking with traditional and outmoded perceptions of their administrations and relabelling their administrative staff as “professional services” or “directorates”… (2003, p. 95).

Since then, the term ‘Professional Services Staff’ has been shortened to ‘Professional Staff’ in the UK higher education literature (Whitchurch, 2006b, 2008a, 2008c; Whitchurch, et al., 2009) and is used to describe senior, specialised members of UK university administration, as well as university staff who are undertaking ‘hybrid roles’ (HEFCE, 2010). By contrast, Szekeres’ definition of this new nomenclature is that it encompasses “…administrative staff, general staff, non-academic staff, allied staff…” (2011, p. 679).

The acceptance of the term ‘Professional Staff’ in the UK highlights an emerging government policy emphasis, which recognised a “…shift in professional service roles from transactional services to a more strategic approach to HEI support…” (HEFCE, 2010, p. 39). Its introduction reflects the rising aspirational and professional needs of this occupational group both here and overseas, as well as the increasing focus on institutional performance and accountability. Despite this, at the present time there does not seem to be similar progress for this staffing group in Australia, given that ‘Professional Staff’ (or its derivative) does not yet figure in Australian HE government policy documentation, related university staffing reports (Larkins, 2012), nor does it currently feature on the official DIISRTE website.

Whilst it would appear that the acceptance of the term ‘Professional Staff’ addresses, in part, the issue of unsuitable nomenclature for university administration, simply adopting a broad descriptor on its own may not achieve the desired fundamental shift in perception about this
staffing group. This potential shortfall has already been demonstrated in the redundancy of the previously advocated, all-encompassing term of ‘General Staff’. Furthermore, the application of a single broad descriptor is problematic given the diverse nature of this staffing group – an issue referred to in participants’ responses regarding the unsuitability of the ‘General Staff’ nomenclature.

The diversity of general staff and the inappropriateness of a single broad descriptor for this group were further highlighted recently in research by Graham (2010), on the role general staff undertook in relation to student outcomes. In discussing the implications of her research, in particular, the different approaches and responsibilities of the various staffing subsets of her participant group, Graham (2010, p. 222) asked the question:

…perhaps it is time to be more discerning and descriptive in our nomenclature for general staff, thereby facilitating an improved conceptualisation of the wide range of contributions made by these staff?

The answer to this rhetorical question as found in the participant responses regarding nomenclature preferences from this current study is a resounding ‘Yes’. Despite the complexities involved, it is clearly time for the identified shortfalls in university staffing terminology to be addressed. The adoption of the term ‘Professional Staff’ is a promising start towards solving the nomenclature issues raised in this research and the surrounding literature. However, the patchy and ad hoc manner in which this terminology has been adopted in Australia and the UK and the differing meanings attributed to it in the higher education literature in particular may hamper consensus in the application of and meaning given to this descriptor.

**CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Participants were given the opportunity to nominate least and most preferred common terms used for their work (these options were determined prior to the introduction of ‘Professional Staff’, which gained particular prominence in 2009-2010 post the data-collection phase of the study). The options included ‘University Administrator’, ‘Administrative Staff’, ‘General Staff’, ‘Manager’, and ‘Non-Academic Staff’. The findings confirmed that nomenclature is a complex and multi-layered area of inquiry. There was some level of agreement among participants on what was most preferred, with greater consistency of responses shown for least preferred nomenclature. ‘University Administrator’ was the most preferred title (approaching half the participants), followed by ‘Manager’ (more than a quarter) and ‘Administrative Staff’.
‘General Staff’ was the least preferred title (about two-fifths of participants), followed closely by ‘Non-Academic Staff’ (almost two-fifths). The preferences for ‘Administrative Staff’ were almost evenly split in terms of being most and least preferred by participants.

The statistical analysis of the nomenclature preferences of ‘Administrative Staff’ versus ‘Manager’ revealed gender differences. Female participants were significantly more likely to view their preferred nomenclature through the lens of their own salary level than were male participants. Female participants with undergraduate qualifications and below were statistically more likely to select the nomenclature preference of ‘Administrative Staff’ over male participants of equivalent education and/or any participant with postgraduate qualifications. Male participants with an undergraduate degree were statistically more likely to have indicated a preference for being called ‘Manager’, over female participants with equivalent level qualifications. In turn, female participants were not likely to have indicated a preference for being called ‘Manager’ unless they held postgraduate level qualifications.

Together, male and female participants with degree-level qualifications were statistically more likely to select the nomenclature of ‘Manager’ over those with no university qualifications, noting an earlier finding reported in Chapter 3 that 84 per cent of those participants without university qualifications were female. There were also different preferences across staffing subgroups; ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’ wanted to be known as ‘Managers’, whilst participants who were ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ preferred to be known as ‘General Staff’, the latter highlighting the technical/administrative staffing binary.

Significant findings on least preferred nomenclature was found for the nomenclature of ‘University Administrator’, with participants ‘new’ to universities indicating they least preferred this title of the five nomenclature options. However, this response pattern did not appear for participants with more than 10 years of service, leading to the assumption that those with longer university experience perhaps held a stronger sense of identification with the university sector and thus by extension this descriptor. Similarly, HDR qualified participants were significantly more likely to indicate ‘University Administrator’ as least preferred, than participants on any other level of university qualification or those without university qualifications. This may have to do with the statistically stronger allegiance to a ‘Research Service’ (RS) as opposed to a ‘University Administration’ (UA) career path by participants with HDR qualifications. Additionally, undergraduate female participants who indicated an UA career alignment were significantly more likely to indicate a preference for ‘Administrative
Staff’, than undergraduate males with the same career affiliation or participants with an RS career alignment or higher level of education.

Of the five common forms of nomenclature, none emerged as ideal for all concerned, highlighting the multifaceted nature of these findings, with ‘University Administrator’ being the most positively received and ‘General Staff’ and ‘Non-Academic’ staff the least. Opinions of the term ‘Administrative Staff’ appeared to be divided in large part by the level of participant salary. Participants at the lower HEW salary grades indicated that it was an appropriate work descriptor, whilst participants at the more senior levels indicated that the term was demeaning, being a poor descriptor of the breadth and depth of their work roles, accountabilities and the critical thinking and analysis they performed. The title of ‘Manager’ was primarily seen as appropriate for those participants with managerial level responsibilities. For some, ‘Management’ as opposed to ‘Administration’ was a more appropriate overall staffing descriptor, being indicative of the increasingly complex, ‘value-adding’ work roles being performed collectively by this group. These findings giving depth to current understandings regarding the Manager/Administrator nomenclature dichotomy as discussed in the opening chapter.

Of the two least preferred nomenclatures, ‘General Staff’ was seen as outdated terminology and one which was derogatory to the role undertaken by participants. The main complaint was that it was too broad a descriptor given the diverse nature of the staffing group. However, ‘General Staff’ was also a significantly preferred term for participants in the staffing subgroup of ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’, thereby highlighting the complexities involved with developing a single nomenclature that overarched the binary divide of technical and administrative staff. In turn, ‘Non-Academic’ was described as divisive and negative terminology indicating that academic staff were primary and all else were ‘other’ or of lesser importance, thus continuing the ‘us and them’ mentality. This negative term was seen to invalidate the contribution of staff who were not faculty, plus the application of this descriptor failed to recognise the increasing credentialism of this group.

Participants indicated that they wanted to be known by terminology that was relevant and positive, providing clarity on the roles and responsibility levels undertaken. The issue of nomenclature was found to be connected with occupational identity and an expressed need for workplace recognition and respect. The emerging use of the term ‘Professional Staff’ indicated growing aspirational and professional needs of this occupational group, with due reference to increasing academic capital and growing performance expectations and accountabilities. However, it is not clear that the adoption of ‘Professional Staff’ on its own will in the longer
term address the multi-layered concerns raised regarding current nomenclature shortcomings. A possible solution and way forward is presented and discussed in Chapter 9.

The next chapter moves beyond nomenclature to the wider issues of professional identity, professional characteristics, stakeholder recognition, and the professionalisation status of this group.
CHAPTER 5
DEGREE OF PROFESSIONAL ALIGNMENT
AND STAKEHOLDER RECOGNITION

As shown in the opening chapter, RMA has been described in the higher education literature as a shifting and evolving occupational group of growing profile and standing. The importance of the effective functioning of research support staff to institutional and national research performance has been argued by the both OECD (Connell, 2004) and the European Commission (Expert Group, 2008). The RMA group has been pronounced as an emerging ‘global profession’ or at the very least a ‘profession in development’. The professionalisation of this group has been fostered to an extent by maturing RMA professional associations both here and overseas which in turn have been assisted in their maturation by formalised international linkages between sister societies through the establishment of INORMS in particular. Against this context, this chapter reports on the study’s wide-ranging inquiry into the degree of professional alignment of this occupational group in terms of participants’: identification with and articulation of a profession; professional characteristics; and perspectives on recognition and accreditation, as elicited through both questionnaire and interview responses.

This chapter presents the findings on: how participants describe their ‘profession’; the degree to which participants see themselves as being a member of a profession (‘Professional Self-Concept’); plus their perceptions of stakeholder recognition of RMA as a profession (‘Professional Stakeholder-Regard’). The results of an inquiry into participants’ professional memberships are presented together with the features of their workplace decision-making and levels of decision-making authority. Profile characteristics of ARMS participants are compared to non-ARMS participants and to American university research administrators who are members of the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA)\(^\text{16}\). Participant perspectives concerning professional accreditation are also discussed. Further, participant perspectives on developmental opportunities available to them in terms of: promotion and advancement; training and development; and peer networking, are reported. In addition, findings regarding participants’ annualised hours of professional development are presented, along with their recommended professional development requirements for their RMA positions.

Table 5.1 summarises the thematic structure of the chapter together with the research questions posed and corresponding data source. For ease of reference the questionnaire items can be found in Appendix E and the interview items in Appendix H.

\(^{16}\) As mentioned in the opening chapter, NCURA is a sister-society to ARMS.
Table 5.1 Overview of Chapter’s Thematic Structure, Items and Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMATIC STRUCTURE</th>
<th>ITEMS AND RESPONSE RATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROFESSIONAL SELF-CONCEPT AND STAKEHOLDER REGARD</strong></td>
<td>This section presents participant ((n = 194)) responses to four questionnaire items: (Q26a)) To what extent do you see yourself as being a member of a profession? (Q26b)) How would you describe your profession? (Q27a)) Do any of the (listed stakeholder groups) see you as a member of a profession? (Q27b)) Any other thoughts on recognition? Also presented are interviewee ((n = 37)) responses to the first-round interview question: (Q5)) The questionnaire covered the area of professional identity of research managers and administrators. Can you elaborate on how you see yourself as a member of a profession and how others see you?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS</strong></td>
<td>This section presents participant ((n = 194)) responses to five questionnaire items: (Q24)) Please indicate if you are a member of the following (listed or ‘other’) associations. (Q28a)) Please indicate the degree to which you would be interested in seeking professional accreditation as a research administrator. (Q28b)) Any other thoughts on accreditation? (Q33)) What is your level of participation in decisions affecting how changes are implemented in your area of responsibility? (Q35)) Please indicate the degree to which decision-making in your area is characterised by the (three itemised) features.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
<td>This section presents participant ((n = 194)) responses to three questionnaire items: (Q25)) How many hours of professional development/training do you undertake annually? (Q43)) What do you regard the opportunity: a) for advancement or promotion in the Research Services area to be? b) for further training and development in the Research Services area to be? c) to associate with peers from other universities or research institutions to be? (Q48d)) On the basis of your experience, if you were asked to give advice to someone about working in Research Services at your level, what advice would you given in terms of: Professional Development requirements?</td>
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**PROFESSIONAL SELF-CONCEPT AND STAKEHOLDER REGARD**

**Specifying Profession**

As a starting point to this area of inquiry, questionnaire participants were asked to describe their profession as indicated in Table 5.1. Their responses to the open-ended questionnaire item were put into QSR.NVivo 8 and analysed for common areas of response. The content of the 182 valid responses reflected three broad interpretations of the question ‘describe your profession’. They
gave a sense of the function or title connected with their job (for example: generalist or specialist), or a description of the workplace, or a comment on ‘profession’. These comprised six categories of response, namely: ‘generalist university administration’ (UA), ‘generalist research services’ (RS), ‘specialist’, ‘workplace description’, ‘not a profession/al’ and ‘professionalisation status’. Figure 5.2 provides the occurrence of mention for each of these emerging categories noting that responses could be coded to more than one. The bars on the graph have been ordered highest to lowest number of responses.

As shown in Figure 5.2, roughly four-fifths of the responses (78 per cent) expressed their profession in terms of a function or a title either from the position of a ‘generalist’ (that is, a holder of primarily transferable skills) (66 per cent of responses) or as a ‘specialist’ (that is, a holder of primarily non-transferable skills) (12 per cent of responses). A typical example of a ‘generalist’ response was:

Administrative service: supporting those in business to carry out their work efficiently and with a clear understanding of what is required both of them and of those with whom they conduct business (32132).

A typical example of a ‘specialist’ response was:

…I started in the University as a veterinarian so that is my primary profession. Added to that is considerable experience in the field of research ethics and…this has extended to
other areas relative to the conduct of responsible research. My profession now is primarily
to do with all aspects of research integrity (31038).

Of the 125 responses that indicated a ‘generalist’ perspective (involving the top two response
categories in Figure 5.2), 70 described their profession in the context of a research services (RS)
role and the remainder within the context of a university administration (UA) role. These
bidirectional viewpoints reflect earlier findings reported in Chapter 3 of two distinct career
alignments for a majority of the participant group, this being either a ‘research services’ (RS)
career alignment or a ‘university administration’ (UA) career alignment. An example of a
‘Generalist (RS)’ response in specifying profession is as follows:

…my profession is the development, deployment and support of information systems to
enable effective management of research and related activities (31090).

An example of a ‘Generalist (UA)’ perspective from the responses is:

Administrative and pastoral management and support to students, the university and the
wider community… (32129).

Drawing on the top three response categories \( n = 148 \) featured in Figure 5.2, and sorting the
participant responses via the two emerging categories of ‘Function’ and ‘Title’, 85 participants
were identified who described their profession in terms of a ‘Function’. It was noted that all but
six of these 85 responses described generic functions, activities, knowledge or skills such as
‘Administration’ or ‘Management’, and of these, just under half (or 45 per cent of the 85
participants) placed the generic or transferable skill or function within a research context. For
example: ‘Research Student Services’ or ‘Research Support in the Tertiary Education Sector’.
Of the 63 participants who provided a ‘Title’ to describe their profession, 56 per cent included
the word ‘research’, such as ‘Research Administrator’, ‘Research Manager’, or similar. Of the
remaining responses, 24 per cent referred to another profession which they identified with, such
as ‘Vet’, ‘Scientist’ or ‘Finance Professional’, and 20 per cent referred to a generic university
title, such as ‘Tertiary Administrator’ or ‘University Management’.

Of the remaining response categories referred to in Figure 5.2, 11 per cent of participants
referred to the characteristic of their work or workplace as being, for example: ‘interesting’;
‘challenging’; ‘underpaid and overworked’; ‘important and under-resourced’; or ‘new and
growing rapidly’.
A further eight percent of the responses were from participants who did not consider university research management and administration to be a profession, and/or they did not see themselves as being in a profession. For example:

… I do not think it’s a profession. There are no standards enforced – therefore many staff do not have the skills required to do their jobs well. Recruitment is not based on any rigorously applied criteria and staff are not required to update their skills to reflect the changes in technology that directly impinge upon our roles (32181).

Data analysis seems like something you would need a specific qualification for and yet having started in the job I find that I really like it without having a degree in statistics or the slightest inclination to get one. If there were a requirement for such a qualification, I would never have been able to get this job or to then find out that I am good at it (32296).

Five participant responses (three per cent) reflected a range of perspectives about the extent or degree of professionalisation occurring for RMA, collectively described as ‘professionalisation status’, for example:

…some specifically interested/dedicated people but also a bit of a catch-all for people with no particular interest or skills in research administration (32051).

This profession relies on on-the-job training plus conceptual and communication skills rather than possession of a professional qualification but it nevertheless embodies a professional approach (32175).

It is a highly specialised profession that requires a comprehensive understanding of internal and external policy and legislation in relation to a very specific field (32232).

Given the diverse range of responses to ‘describe your profession’; there is little evidence that the question triggers a collective sense of ‘being in’ or ‘becoming’ a professional group. If anything, the emphasis is more functional and individual than collective. The word ‘research’ was used to describe ‘profession’ in 37 per cent of responses, so there is no clear and coherent thread of discourse around the connection between research and profession either. What the response to this question does highlight is the existence of many competing perspectives, while contributing a further dimension of evidence to understanding the complexities related to nomenclature presented in Chapter 4. One participant captures all the above in her description:
…a disjointed group of individuals who are doing similar jobs in similar environments and understand the constraints our environment extends but with no coherence and little or no professional identity or recognition as a profession from outsiders either (32200).

**Professional Self-Concept**

The extent to which participants saw themselves as being members of a profession (‘Professional Self-Concept’) was examined using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1) ‘Not at All’ to 6) ‘Very Strongly’ (Q26a). The results were analysed using the descriptive statistic functions of SPSS and are presented in Table 5.3. As shown, 82 per cent of participants reported a mild to very strong professional self-concept, with 15 per cent indicating they did not see themselves as a member of a profession at all.

**Table 5.3 Degree of ‘Professional Self-Concept’ (n = 194)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Mildly</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Quite Strongly</th>
<th>Very Strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>30 (15%)</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
<td>37 (19%)</td>
<td>44 (23%)</td>
<td>46 (24%)</td>
<td>31 (16%)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Chi-square tests were conducted to see if there were any relationships between participant characteristics and the intensity to which they identified with being members of a profession. To do this, four response categories in the questionnaire item’s Likert scale were collapsed into two categories; ‘Moderate’ (combination of ‘Mildly’ and ‘Moderately’) and ‘Strong’ (combination of ‘Quite Strongly to Very Strongly’). The two response categories of ‘Not at All’ and ‘Not Sure’ were set aside for this series of statistical analyses.

**Salary**

Salary level (using the four salary ranges of: ‘HEW 2-5’, ‘HEW 6-7’, ‘HEW 8-9’, ‘HEW 10-10+’) was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 14.577, df = 3, p = .002$). Based on observed versus expected frequencies the higher the participant’s salary the more likely a ‘Strong’ response was indicated, with a ‘Moderate’ response more likely to be shown by participants at lower salary levels. This difference was quite noticeable at the two ends of the salary scale, given that only nine per cent of participants in the HEW 2-5 range indicated a ‘Strong’ professional self-concept compared to 64 per cent of those participants situated at the higher HEW 10/10+.

**Qualification**

Level of qualification was found to be significant (using the four education levels of: ‘No University Qualification’, ‘Undergraduate’, ‘Postgraduate (Non-Research) and ‘HDR’) ($\chi^2 = 10.732, df = 3, p = .013$). In separating out each of the qualification levels and conducting
further chi-square tests, it was found that the professional self-concept of those with HDR qualifications versus those without was significant ($\chi^2 = 6.001, df = 1, p = .014$). When this latter test was layered by the two dominant career trajectories of ‘Research Services’ (RS) and ‘University Administration’ (UA) (together capturing 87 per cent of questionnaire participants as discussed in Chapter 3) and repeated, it was found to be significant for those on an ‘RS’ career trajectory only ($\chi^2 = 4.447, df = 1, p = .035$). From these results, and based on observed versus expected frequencies, it appeared that of the participants with an ‘RS’ career trajectory, those with HDR qualifications were more likely to have indicated a ‘Strong’ professional self-concept than those without. The same response pattern was not apparent for those participants on a ‘UA’ career trajectory.

**Career Trajectory**

Career trajectory (‘RS’ or ‘UA’) was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 5.131, df = 1, p = .024$). Based on observed versus expected frequencies, those on an ‘RS’ trajectory were more likely to indicate a ‘Strong’ response with a ‘Moderate’ response more likely to be shown by those with a ‘UA’ career alignment. Together, the differences in findings between these two career trajectories and strength of a participant’s professional self-concept can perhaps be attributed to the, arguably, more specialist field of RMA, compared to mainstream university administration and the relationship between specialist or bounded knowledge and professionhood (Fournier, 2000).

**Findings of Non-Significance**

Gender was not found to be of significance, nor was staffing subgroup or overall length-of-service in universities. Similarly, professional membership to ARMS (being the dominant membership of the participant group as will be shown later in this chapter under the section entitled: ‘Professional Characteristics’) indicated no significant effect, nor did participants’ location within any of the five university groups (for example: ‘Go8’ or ‘ATN’). In turn, for the 30 participants who indicated that they did not regard themselves as members of a profession, 77 per cent were at HEW 6-7 or below and just over half held no university level qualifications.

**Professional Stakeholder-Regard**

In order to gauge their perception of the level of professional regard shown to them in their workplace, questionnaire participants were asked to indicate whether or not they thought key stakeholders (‘Staff Within Your Work Area’; ‘Academics’; ‘University Management’; ‘DEST’ (‘DIISRTE’); ‘Government Funding Agencies’; ‘Non-Government Funding Agencies’;
‘Business and Industry’) saw participants as being members of a profession (Q27a). The three response categories were: ‘Yes’, ‘No’, or ‘Unsure’.

Figure 5.4 juxtaposes these findings (‘Professional Stakeholder-Regard’) against the earlier reported finding of whether or not participants perceived themselves to be members of a profession (‘Professional Self-Concept’). This comparison was enabled by first converting the original Likert scale categories of ‘Mildly’, ‘Moderately’, ‘Quite Strongly’ and ‘Very Strongly’ to ‘Yes’, and mapping the ‘Not at All’ and ‘Unsure’ scale items directly to ‘No’ and ‘Unsure’ respectively. The bars in the graph have been ordered from highest to lowest ‘Yes’ responses.

Areas of note arising from the findings presented in Figure 5.4 are that participants’ professional self-concept was much higher than how they perceived any stakeholder group’s professional regard to be of them. The stakeholder group perceived to have the highest professional regard for participants was ‘Staff within Your Work Area’. Conversely, the stakeholder group perceived to be the least likely to view participants as being members of a profession were ‘Academics’, followed by ‘Business/Industry’ and ‘University Management’. Using the compute variable function in SPSS, it was found that only five percent of all participants indicated that they saw themselves as being members of a profession and perceived
that all stakeholder groups saw them in the same light. The characteristics of these participants indicated a mix of gender, salary and qualification levels, staffing subgroups and university groupings. Small cell counts precluded testing these findings for significance.

Chi-square tests were performed to measure for relationships between participants’ perceptions of whether or not academics saw them as being members of a profession, and a range of participant characteristics. The first of these indicated that gender was significant ($\chi^2 = 12.394$, $df = 3$, $p = .006$). Based on observed versus expected frequencies, it appeared that male participants were more likely to have indicated that academics perceived them to be members of a profession than female participants, who in turn were more likely than male participants to indicate that academics did not perceive them to be members of a profession. These results contribute to the gendered findings of participants’ profile characteristics in Chapter 3, and those of Chapter 4 regarding perspectives on nomenclature – specifically, the gendered nature of the apparent sense of entitlement of male participants to claim the title of ‘Manager’ more readily than female participants.

In turn, the only permutation of participants’ qualification levels found to be of significance was the variable: ‘HDR’ versus ‘All other education levels’ ($\chi^2 = 7.988$, $df = 2$, $p = .018$). Based on observed versus expected frequencies, it appeared that HDR qualified participants were more likely to have indicated that academics perceived them to be members of a profession than participants at any other education level (including participants with no university level qualification). This finding and all other findings pertinent to the HDR qualified participants in this study are jointly discussed in Chapter 9. Conversely, salary level was not found to be of significance nor was: career trajectory; staffing subgroup; ARMS membership status; or whether or not the participant had previous employment as an academic or had previously undertaken research.

**Perceptions of Recognition**

The 51 valid open-ended responses received to the follow-up questionnaire item described in Table 5.1, which asked participants for their thoughts on recognition (Q27b), were put into QSR.NVivo 8 and analysed for common categories. Once the response categories were established, the data was coded to these categories and initially analysed by frequency of occurrence, noting that individual responses may be categorised to more than one. Eight categories emerged in the analysis of the responses. These categories are shown in Figure 5.5 along with occurrence (total counts) presented in percentages. Some four-fifths of responses
indicated that participants’ work was undervalued or unrecognised. ‘Poor understanding of the RMA role’ was the most frequent response (23 per cent of the counts (occurrence) of mention).

![Figure 5.5 Thoughts on Workplace Recognition by Occurrence (n = 61)](image)

**Poor Understanding of the RMA Role (n = 14)**

As shown in Figure 5.5, 23 per cent of the responses were from participants who thought that the lack of recognition they experienced was a reflection of a poor understanding of the RMA role, thereby highlighting the relevance of the investigative work conducted by this study into participant roles and responsibilities, as presented in Chapter 6. Examples include:

> ...seems like most in the university sector have a poor view of research services. They do not see the services that enable them to focus on their research. These services make a significant contribution to process and project management. The risk and IP management facilitated by research services – these concerns might hold back a researcher from reaching too far. However, if the research services are used then it relieves the researcher from considerable weight... (31090).

There is little appreciation of the level of detail and complexity involved, there is no direct link to student numbers (apart from those dealing with the relatively small numbers in higher degrees by research) and the range of responsibilities varies among universities.
Hence the role is not as readily identifiable as say: finance; examinations; and student admissions (32175).

We do deserve recognition! However, most people just see us as a Post Office for their grant applications and have no real understanding of what is involved in our roles (32264).

**Poor Treatment of RMA by Academic Researchers** \((n = 9)\)

Fifteen percent of the responses came from participants who expressed that the lack of recognition they experienced had to do with the way academics treated them. Examples include:

Despite having extensive post graduate qualifications – academic staff regard general staff as ‘non-academic’ – as though we have never actually carried out academic research in our own discipline – for example, my area of expertise is [X] science but I am not seen as a ‘scientist’ but an ‘admin person’ by academic staff. This is particularly annoying for my staff who actually have PhDs and are sometimes more qualified than the academic staff. So you are seen neither as having academic interests or professional standing for the management job you do (32087).

General staff members in universities are generally held in low esteem by academics. There is a good deal of academic snobbery (32214).

The second quotation reflects earlier findings on nomenclature preferences and the increasing reluctance of participants to be called ‘General Staff’. Together, these responses and similar others underscore the previously discussed finding that participants perceived academics as being the least likely of all stakeholder groups to see research services staff as being members of a profession. The issue of workplace relationships between RMA and academic researchers is looked at in Chapter 7.

**Low Recognition as RMA Not Seen as a Profession** \((n = 9)\)

Fifteen per cent of responses indicated that RMA was not seen as a profession and therefore, the work of RMA attracted little recognition by others. In the words of one participant:

Research managers/administrators differ from many professions in that there is no content-specific training/knowledge requirement (like law, accountancy or medicine) and our skills
are generic and transferable. This may be an obstacle to being viewed by some as a profession… (32075).

The heterogeneous nature of RMA as articulated in the above participant response has been raised as a problematic feature behind the professionalisation of the RMA occupational group, particularly with respect to the lack of systematic professional development as will be discussed in this chapter under the section entitled: ‘Professional Development’.

RMA Work is Undervalued \( (n = 9) \)

More general perspectives about RMA work being undervalued featured in a further 15 per cent of the responses. For example:

Generally so long as work is done no one really thinks about you… (32301).

As indicated in the opening chapter, similar sentiments were reported in Allen-Collinson’s study of UK RMA in which participants reported that their role was invisible to their academic work colleagues ‘…particularly when the job was performed effectively and efficiently…’ (2006, p. 282).

Recognition not Sought/not Important \( (n = 6) \)

Ten per cent of the responses expressed views that recognition was not important to them because: they found it irrelevant; they drew their need for recognition from outside interests; in doing a good job from a professional standpoint therefore they can live without recognition from others in the workplace. For example:

Many academics hold on to old ideas about non-academic staff being a lower life form and they are quite voluble in expressing that. My identity is strongly embedded in other aspects of my life so it does not matter to me. I see myself as a facilitator helping others to look good and to perform well and am happy to abandon my own ego. Additionally my moral code about my performance is more important to me than the opinion of others (32152).

Improving Recognition Levels \( (n = 6) \)

A further ten per cent of the responses were about participants experiencing (and/or at the very least anticipating) an improvement in the level of recognition of their work as a result of increasing role complexity, associated increase in compliance regulations, and/or through the profile raising work of conferences run by ARMS or INORMS. One of participants in this response category indicated a hope that the advent of the RQF would lead to greater recognition
of RMA work. This latter notion is returned to in Chapter 8, when participant perspectives about the possible future impacts of the RQF are examined.

**Peer Recognition \((n = 4)\)**

Six per cent of responses were about the recognition which comes from peer groups and professional networks:

> I never really saw (RMA) as a profession until the ARMS conference 2006 when I saw so many people in the field come together and value their ‘profession’ of research management/services (32282).

Peer recognition, as exemplified in the above participant's response undoubtedly underlies the earlier reported finding that ‘Staff Within your Work Area’ were perceived to be the most likely to have a higher professional regard for participants of all stakeholders groups.

**Problematic Nature of RMA Compliance Role \((n = 4)\)**

The final response category consisted of four participants who indicated a lack of recognition by others as an outcome of research services staff having to perform compliance roles; acting at times as ‘police’ of compliance regulations. Two examples:

> Perception of us as professionals varies – when they need our help we are professionals, when we are blocking their way we are just general staff… (32184).

> Our office and the work we do are largely not recognised as being beneficial to the researcher or the University as a whole. We struggle with the image of being the red tape as opposed to having the role of cutting through the red tape… (32228).

Regarding the problematic nature of the RMA/researcher compliance dynamic, the following quotation drawn from an interviewee’s response to a question on typical workplace interactions between RMA and academic researchers (see the presentation and discussion of findings for this first-round interview question (Q6) in Chapter 7) provides a more positive note:

> …some people in the research integrity area of my office grapple with the policing role as being too negative all the time but I think on the whole the researcher understands that what we are trying to do is to facilitate research happening and that facilitation could be
finding funding but it could be also…helping the researcher in the legislative framework which includes state and commonwealth acts… (1103).

Participant perspectives in this response category highlight the facilitative versus compliance nature of RMA work, as discussed in the opening chapter. The issue of compliance is returned to in detail in Chapter 6 in the presentation on the study’s findings regarding participants’ roles, accountabilities and performance expectations, and again in Chapter 7 in relation to its impact on workplace relationships between RMA and academic researchers.

**Perspectives at Interview**

Interviewees were asked in the first interview to elaborate on how they saw themselves as members of a profession (‘Professional Self-Concept’) and how others saw them in this respect (‘Professional Stakeholder-Regard’) (Q5). The contents of these interviews reflected the content of a number of the response categories raised in the preceding subsection, which arose from the surveyed perspectives on recognition. What follows are illustrative quotations drawn from the interview transcripts ordered around three emerging common response categories, namely: ‘RMA as a Profession’; ‘Lack of Professional Regard and/or Recognition of RMA’; plus the ‘Changing Nature of RMA’.

**RMA as a Profession**

In addressing the question, a number of interviewees commented on the notion of RMA being a profession, with their remarks showcasing a wide spectrum of perspectives as evident in the following quotations:

…we are growing and being recognised as a profession and really we are riding on this crest of this wave which has just been taking along without us having to do an awful lot… (1103).

I am not convinced I see it as a profession to be completely blunt…it can only be constructed as a profession I think if there is some sort of accreditation around it and the way I see it there really is not anything at the moment…I do not think we should lose sight …that we are here to help research happen, we are here to support it, the real pointy-end is … researchers are actually doing the research and …there is a risk that we will think that we are bigger than the actual research activity by making it into some profession as such…I think we need to…keep a mindset that we need to be servants to the actual researchers… (1115).
I do not see myself as a member of a profession in this job… (given) the level I am working at and possibly also the area I would say, administrative… I think the ones at a higher level would not see it that way; they would consider that they were more in a profession (1219).

Lack of Professional Regard and/or Recognition of RMA

The main sentiment in the interview responses in this response category was that academics did not perceive RMA work as that of a profession. Interviewees offered two main reasons for this perceived lack of professional recognition, as shown in the following illustrative quotations.

First, that there was a poor understanding (and/or execution) of the RMA role:

Oh I think there is a lack of recognition of what we do, but more than that, I think that quite often there is a fairly limited view of what research offices can do. But then sometimes I turn that around the other way and say yes they can perfectly well hold that view if we are not doing anything to disabuse them of the idea. I mean we could be doing a lot more to be showing that we do add value and we could operate in ways that show we are professional and are working with, not separate from the faculties …for the greater good of the universities. The office needs to keep in mind the overall strategic direction as it is very easy to get sucked into the detail… (1231).

…personally if you asked me what I did I would say I was a research manager… if you asked what… some members of the research office see themselves as and would probably see me as, it would probably be university administrator. If you asked what the average researcher or research manager, you know the average research professor or younger academic… would see me and the other office of research people as being, I would suppose it would be bloody bureaucrats… (1111).

Second, that the lack of recognition was a continuation of the ‘us and them’ dynamic or academic hegemony:

I think we still have very much the general/academic staff divide and we are not seen on an equal footing as somebody who is a professor or a head of a unit out in a faculty. I do not think we are equated with them at all even though a lot of us probably have much more administrative and management experience and supervisory experience then they do and I do not think there is enough professional recognition for people like myself… (1213).
I see myself as sort of semi-professional …or leading into professional, I try to keep in contact with ARMS and try and take advantage of opportunities to extend my experience and qualifications but it always remains in universities that there is this big divide between academics and non-academics and you know sort of labeling everybody general staff which covers a wide variety of people of different occupations in the university which is still seen as a sub-class. You are not an academic so you are not professional… (1207).

Additionally, that the lack of professional recognition extended to RMA staff that were highly credentialed:

…because I have got a HEW classification I no longer have a brain…I am not really an academic despite the fact that I have got four academic qualifications, I am not an academic, therefore I am not in inverted commas “qualified” to make academic decisions. Now as you can tell from my tone of voice, I find this particularly galling that just because I am paid under a different pay award system somehow that makes me different. …it’s not just here at (current university), I have struck this in most other universities …Quite often I have actually been more qualified than some of the academic staff, I mean…some of my staff actually have PhDs…and some have even had previous experience as an academic…but somehow they do not think that (this person) is “qualified” to advise staff on these sorts of things in relation to grants. Anyway, that is what I think is the major problem within universities for managers regardless of whether research or student administration or whatever, that you are seen somehow as not qualified to participate in (a) discussion on academic matters… (1223).

On the other hand, one interviewee commented on what to do when the academic researcher/RMA dynamic was not working well:

I think sometimes if things have not gone well for people and they tend to use the argument around academics versus non-academics and ‘What would you know about research you have never done it’ but I think in general that is usually only when things have gone badly. When (a researcher’s) level of understanding of the services that are on offer is quite poor…. the way to change that opinion is to meet with them and talk to them about…(what) the office can do for them and through that engagement process they seem to come around… (1116)

Others indicated that the level of recognition they experienced from others (mainly academics) varied depending on the circumstances involved. An example of this is provided by the
following excerpt, in which the interviewee also indicated variability in how she perceived herself as being a member of a profession.

…well it swings around a bit…you have good weeks and bad weeks, sometimes I think ...yeah we are…I do see us as a profession and I think that we do offer specialised services that take quite a bit of training...when you are a really competent research grants officer in my view who can really make some difference to the quality of the applications. I think we have got a lot to help academics with grantsmanship and presentation and just how… to improve and make their applications easy to digest, to increase the chance that they might receive …more favourable assessments….Contract negotiation to protect the academics from the university is another area which is quite skilled that we do. So I think …we have that research knowledge…or research management skills. So I think we are a profession…I think some researchers value us and others think that we are just clerks rubber stamping and throwing bureaucracy in their way and making it harder for them to do their research and if we would all just go away and be sacked there would be more money for research assistance and necessary things and life would be better. So you know it’s from one extreme to the other … (1220).

**Changing Nature of RMA**

There were also a number of interviewees who indicated that they were experiencing a change in either their professional self-concept and/or how academic researchers were responding to RMA staff, as shown in the following illustrative examples. The work of ARMS and the associated professionalisation processes were also seen to be driving changes in this area.

**Changes in the academic researcher/RMA interactive dynamic:**

Well I have noticed a big change …when I started [X] years ago, it was quite aggressive … quite demanding …we could never do anything right … I suppose it was they saw particularly the research ethics and compliance …as a hindrance to… what they needed to get done … but over the last few years we have made a lot of effort to … assist …to find out what their needs are and then to come up with processes…we still have to meet our obligations as an institution, but how we go about doing it is really up to us and we want to do it in a way that is …more beneficial to the researchers rather than just an administrative nightmare .. (1202).

…well I certainly see myself as a member of a profession and particularly since ARMS came into existence, I think before ARMS came into existence probably almost the entire
university community really just saw research officers as another point of administration but did not really see any professional values in those sorts of areas but I think because of the increase of complexity in particular and also the development of people in research offices, I think at least amongst researchers, research managers… get a lot more respect than they used to. And they are I think highly valued (however)… there are still some, I guess you would call them ‘old-school’ researchers or managers, who may not see the value in us still but I think they are sort of a dying breed (1224).

Changes occurring as a result of the professionalising influences of ARMS in particular:
…I think maybe going to INORMS this year, you know which was the expanded international version of ARMS this year, I think that is when I really started to think of it in terms of a profession… the sort of coming together of societies, international societies of research managers and I think that is when I started to sort of get a grip on the fact that we… that we are part of a profession… in a lot of ways, we are just seen as administrative support, maybe more internally, hopefully that will change… (1214).

…we had one of the (chapter conveners) of ARMS in our office and (the convener had) been quite critical in making everybody understand that they are actually part of a fairly niche area and tried to get people to see that the work that they are doing should be seen as professional … so that is probably had a bit of an effect, (the convener) always gives a report from the ARMS conferences and encourages people to go along and talks about professional accreditation for the area… there is a fair number of people in the office who are in the process of getting some sort of … professional masters … so that probably helped a lot (1116).

…I do not think others see us as a member of a profession, I see us as a member of quite a unique niche area, there are not that many so for me from the development point of view it is quite easy when you are moving from state to state because there are not many people with the experience. So I definitely see that we are like a member of a profession and I think that anyone who works in a research office feels that way but unfortunately I do not think it’s perceived that way outside because of the lack of understanding of what we actually do. I think they see us as processing things rather than the knowledge that we actually have and how we can use that knowledge strategically. But I definitely think that having the ARMS… is helping things that way, having our own conference every year and they are, I think making an effort to kind of make sure our area is seen as a profession… (1225).
However, it must be said that ARMS was not without its critics in terms of the strength of its lobbying power and influence in particular:

…if we were truly professional and we were out there, we would be advocating the value-add we have to institutions properly to our Deans and the university hierarchies, and we would be cementing that there needs to be research administration slotted in conversations in …how universities are shaped…In America, the American government with the Council of Government Relations and Society of Research Administrators… they are lobby groups as well as professional societies…we do not have that, ARMS do not do that… (1126).

Then again, the following from an ‘ARMS-insider’ perspective:

…ARMS is currently having a debate within its National Executive on how they should be providing input to policy arena as well so I see as that develops that will be an avenue for managers and administrators to have a voice directly into the policy debates as well… ARMS is …moving to a professional secretariat body and I think the next step now having moved to that model is to use that secretariat to start gathering the base information when issues come up. So the Executive members can then give the smarts around it to develop policy positions (1128).

In short, from the questionnaire and interview findings presented in this subsection, it would appear that the issue of recognition of this group is a challenging and multi-dimensional one, particularly with regard to workplace relationships. While beyond the scope of this chapter, there were a number of dynamics involved in the academic/administrator interaction according to the study’s participants, including but not limited to: organisational culture; experienced researcher versus early career researcher; length of time in the role; level of qualifications and approach to the role taken by respondent and by the wider research services office, including the visibility and performance of its value-adding function. These themes are explored in greater detail in Chapters 6 and 7. The responses provided in this study illuminate one area of potential motivation behind this group’s claims of professionhood, as will be discussed further in Chapter 9 in the subsection entitled: ‘The Appeal of the Profession’.
PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Professional Memberships

Questionnaire participants were asked whether they were a member of a professional association (Q24), specifically, ‘ARMS’, ‘ATEM’, ‘AICD’ (Australian Institute of Company Directors), or ‘Other’, noting that a participant could be a member of more than one. These associations were selected by the researcher as being the most likely entities to which RMA participants would belong to. This assumption was proved correct given the responses received. The results were analysed using the descriptive statistics functions of SPSS, and are shown in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Memberships of Professional Associations (n = 194)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NIL MEMBERSHIPS</th>
<th>ARMS</th>
<th>ATEM</th>
<th>AICD</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>75 (39%)</td>
<td>96 (50%)</td>
<td>13 (7%)</td>
<td>13 (7%)</td>
<td>44 (23%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the results in Table 5.6 show, half of the questionnaire participants indicated they were members of ARMS, this being the most common membership, with almost two-fifths indicating no membership of any association. Regarding cross-membership, of the 96 ARMS participants, 36 were also members of another association; whilst nine ATEM and two AICD participant members were, likewise, members of more than one association (hence the percentages in Table 5.6 exceed 100 per cent).

When the ‘Other’ professional memberships were analysed, one membership group – ‘PRATS’ – stood out from the rest as having the highest frequency of membership (six per cent). The Postgraduate Research Administrators Taskforce (PRATS) has been in operation since 1997 and has since been renamed the Australasian Research Training Administrators (ARTA), with membership within all Australian universities and a number in New Zealand – some 49 universities. Although ARTA is not a professional association, it represents an impressive grassroots network within the Australasian RMA group – particularly those from the ‘RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)’ staffing subgroup. According to its website, ARTA is:

…the administrative support network closely aligned with the Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (DDOGS). The group consists of staff engaged in the administration of research degrees within higher education institutions in Australia and New Zealand. These administrative areas include, but are not limited to, scholarships, thesis examination, management, professional development, training, support, projects and policy development (ARTA, 2009, p. 1).
Following the data collection phase of this study, it was noted that according to the then ARMS President Dr Ian McMahon (2009), ARMS had 690 (this has since increased to more than 1000 members according to the ARMS website at the time of writing) members drawn from a number of industries including universities, hospitals, and other major research entities. Therefore, the perspectives of at least 14 per cent of the overall ARMS membership, and a higher percentage again of ARMS members working in universities, were captured in this study.

Profile Characteristics of ARMS Members

Comparison of ARMS and Non-ARMS Participant Characteristics

Table 5.7 shows the results of a comparison between the profile characteristics of ARMS (n = 96) and non-ARMS (n = 98) participants. The most noticeable differences between these two subgroups relate to participants’ education and salary levels, with 68 per cent of all non-university qualified participants and 86 per cent of all HEW 2-5 participants being non-ARMS members. Conversely, 76 per cent of all HEW 10-10+ and 68 per cent of postgraduate participants were members of ARMS. The low ARMS membership percentages for the more junior RMA may reflect the personal choice of the participant but it may also be a result of management decisions. That is, there may be an internal policy of not nominating the more inexperienced staff to be part of their university’s corporate membership of ARMS.

Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between ARMS and non-ARMS participants and their profile characteristics. Findings of significance as shown in Table 5.7 were found for level of education (p = .016) and level of salary (p < .001). The observed versus expected frequencies indicated differences at the two ends of the education spectrum, with participants without university qualifications more likely to not be ARMS members, whilst those with postgraduate (including HDR) qualifications were more likely to be ARMS members. Similarly, for salary levels, those participants on the HEW 2-5 salary range were much less likely to be members of ARMS, whilst those at the HEW 8-9 range or above were. These findings appear to indicate that ARMS was not attracting the more junior RMA participants at the time of survey, pointing to a likely shortfall in the professionalisation processes for this group.
Table 5.7 Relationships between ARMS and Non-ARMS Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ARMS Participants</th>
<th>Non-ARMS Participants</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>( \chi^2 ) (df)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( p )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27 (28%)</td>
<td>24 (25%)</td>
<td>.331 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>69 (72%)</td>
<td>74 (75%)</td>
<td>.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( \chi^2 ) (df)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
<td>14 (14%)</td>
<td>.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>23 (24%)</td>
<td>25 (25%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>36 (38%)</td>
<td>32 (33%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>29 (30%)</td>
<td>23 (24%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>5 (5%)</td>
<td>4 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( \chi^2 ) (df)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No University Qualifications</td>
<td>16 (17%)</td>
<td>34 (35%)</td>
<td>10.303 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Undergraduate</td>
<td>28 (29%)</td>
<td>30 (31%)</td>
<td>30.360 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Postgraduate (coursework)</td>
<td>28 (29%)</td>
<td>18 (18%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- HDR</td>
<td>24 (25%)</td>
<td>16 (16%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( \chi^2 ) (df)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 2-5</td>
<td>5 (5%)</td>
<td>30 (31%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 6-7</td>
<td>32 (33%)</td>
<td>39 (40%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 8-9</td>
<td>34 (36%)</td>
<td>21 (21%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 10-10+</td>
<td>25 (26%)</td>
<td>8 (8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings of Non-Significance

A chi-square test conducted to test for relationships based on intensity (‘Moderate’ versus ‘Strong’) to which ARMS and non-ARMS participants indicated they saw themselves as being members of a profession (Q24b), was not found to be of significance. That is, the strength of participants’ professional self-concept was not found to correspond to their membership of ARMS or lack thereof. However, in addressing the same questionnaire item, of the 30 participants who indicated they were ‘Not at All’ members of a profession, 73 per cent were not members of ARMs; and of the six participants who answered this question with ‘Not Sure’, all were likewise not members of ARMS. There were also no findings of significance in relation ARMS membership and participants’ responses to the surveyed questions on: degree of interest in seeking accreditation (Q28a); perspectives regarding the degree to which research service roles had changed (Q49a); or the likelihood of participants remaining in a research services career path in the next five years (Q50a).

Comparison of ARMS and NCURA Members’ Characteristics

In Chapter 3, the demographic and profile characteristics of participants were presented. A small number of these characteristics were compared with Shelley’s (2008) RMA study, and to
a limited extent, to two profile studies conducted in 2005 (T. Roberts & House, 2006) and 2010
(Shambrook & Roberts, 2011) involving US university research administrators. The above
mentioned profile studies drew exclusively on NCURA memberships. NCURA is the sister-
society of ARMS. In Table 5.8, the data extracted by the author on ARMS membership is
compared to NCURA for modal age range (being the age range that appears most often in the
respective data sets), gender and educational qualification.

Table 5.8 Comparison of Profile Characteristics of ARMS and NCURA Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 96</td>
<td>n = 1,143</td>
<td>n = 226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Male</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Female</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Modal</td>
<td>40-49years (38%)</td>
<td>40-49years (32%)</td>
<td>40-49 years (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No University Qualifications</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Undergraduate</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Postgraduate</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although ARMS membership indicated a slightly higher percentage of male members when
compared to the two NCURA profile studies (noting that this ratio moves to 74 per cent
female/24 per cent male when looking at the total Australian participant group), these gender
ratios are reasonably consistent with approximately three females for every male participant in
each population group (see Table 5.8). More marked differences emerged in the comparison of
member education levels, with a higher percentage of both non-university qualified and
postgraduate members for ARMS members, particularly in relation to the 2010 NCURA profile
study (which involved a broader sampling method than did the 2005 study). The modal age
range is the same for each group, with somewhat similar percentages reported.

Accreditation

Questionnaire participants were asked about their level of interest in seeking professional
accreditation as a research administrator, using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1) ‘Not at
All’ to 6) ‘Very Strongly’ (Q28a). The results were analysed using the descriptive statistics
functions of SPSS and are presented in Table 5.9. As shown, 79 per cent of the study’s
participants indicated varying degrees of interest in professional accreditation, with the
remaining 21 per cent indicating either no interest or were not sure.
Table 5.9 Degree of Interest in Professional Accreditation \((n = 194)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale of Interest</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Mildly</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Quite Strongly</th>
<th>Very Strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>35 (18%)</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
<td>39 (20%)</td>
<td>56 (29%)</td>
<td>35 (18%)</td>
<td>23 (12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When reported by the five main staffing subgroups as shown in Table 5.10, it would appear that, in percentage terms, the degree to which participants were interested in seeking professional accreditation (when combining the response categories of ‘Quite Strongly’ and ‘Very Strongly’) was highest for the ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’ staffing subgroup, followed by ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’. Conversely, the largest response majority involving just under 40 per cent of the 30 participants who indicated they were ‘Not At All’ interested in professional accreditation, were from the ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ staffing subgroup.

Table 5.10 Degree of Interest in Professional Accreditation by Main Staffing Subgroups \((n = 162)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale of Interest</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Mildly</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Quite Strongly</th>
<th>Very Strongly</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Grants/Finance)</td>
<td>7 (13%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>5 (9%)</td>
<td>18(34%)</td>
<td>13(25%)</td>
<td>9 (17%)</td>
<td>53(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Grad Studies/Grad Students)</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>13(35%)</td>
<td>7 (19%)</td>
<td>6 (16%)</td>
<td>5 (14%)</td>
<td>37(23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Data/IT Systems)</td>
<td>12(39%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>6 (19%)</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>31(19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Ethics)</td>
<td>3 (14%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (19%)</td>
<td>7 (33%)</td>
<td>6 (29%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>21(13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Director/Director</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>20(12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30(19%)</td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
<td>30(19%)</td>
<td>44(27%)</td>
<td>32(19%)</td>
<td>21(13%)</td>
<td>162 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The follow-up open-ended questionnaire item seeking participants’ thoughts on accreditation (Q28b) received 51 valid responses. Of these, 27 indicated they were not interested in accreditation, with a number of concerns being raised such as:

We often recruit from outside of the profession and then train people up. Accreditation could impact on ability to recruit and it can be hard to find the right people already (32154).
Totally unnecessary – in [X] this has become an expensive form of gate-keeping with accrediting bodies making a lot of money and no real improvement in professionalism or quality resulting (32203).

Gazell and Pugh (1993) stated that despite significant increases in credentialism in American public service administrators, that this has not led to ‘…a concomitant increase in the esteem with which they are held by the public…’ (p. 1940). By substituting the word ‘public’ for ‘stakeholders’ (including academics) in their statement of findings, it would appear that the following participant’s concern about the validity of accreditation has salience:

I am not sure to what degree this would improve the image of research administrators in the eyes of academics. I deal with a lot of doctors and they would probably see it as a qualification in basket weaving (32182).

Of the 16 participants who responded favourably to accreditation, the most common emphasis was on how accreditation could assist in future employability, particularly for work overseas or as a reputation enhancer:

Accreditation would enhance opportunities to be taken seriously across the whole sector (32184).

Excellent idea for enhancing professional status of research administrators… (31218).

Responses of the remaining eight participants were either conditional in their interest in accreditation or indicated they were unsure as to the value of accreditation, as follows:

I am not sure that formal accreditation would have any stronger benefit than experience alone. Perhaps it’s considered that membership in the various associations incorporates recognition of a profession (32025).

One final participant’s comment provides a pertinent rider to the notion of RMA accreditation:

Need to be cautious. Accreditation should be based on a need and this has not been clearly articulated by anyone yet to my knowledge. Also need to be careful we do not cut off access by new talented workforce. Structured learning programs would be beneficial though (32065).
American research administrators have had the opportunity to seek certification as a Certified Research Administrator (CRA), as awarded by the Research Administrators Certification Council (RACC), since the early 1990s. According to personal communication from Judy Campbell, Executive Director of RACC (J. Campbell, 2009), as at July 2009 there were 1,234 Certified Research Administrators in the US, 88 per cent of whom worked within a university at the time of undertaking the certification exam. This concentration of university research administrators is emphasised by the finding that over half of the certified research administrators were members of NCURA, as opposed to 28 per cent being members of the Society of Research Administrators–International (SRA International) (noting some were members of both associations) (J. Campbell, 2009). RACC’s Executive Director went on to say that the results of an internal survey in 2008 found that most of the research administrators sought the CRA credential because of professional pride, whilst some found it helpful to obtain employment or increased professional opportunities and, in some instances, salary increases (J. Campbell, 2009).

For Australian RMA, there is currently no accreditation process or defined qualification path and, as will be shown in the following section, relatively poor uptake of ongoing professional development. However, this overall situation is changing to a degree since the time of the study’s data collection phase, with new developments in this area tied to the recently developed strategic plan of ARMS as described in the opening chapter. Most pertinent is that ARMS conducted a feasibility study in 2012 into an accreditation process for its members; an initiative which has since been gaining momentum as shown by the recent announcement of eight ‘foundation level modules’ to be offered by ARMS at their national conference in September 2013 (ARMS Executive, 2013b, p. 1).

**Decision-Making Authority and Characteristics**

*Participation Level*

Participants were asked to indicate what their level of participation was in decisions affecting their area of responsibility, using a six-point response scale of increasing levels of involvement in decision-making (‘No Voice’; ‘Right of Information’; ‘Right to be Heard/Advise’; ‘A Participation in Reaching Decisions’; ‘Shared Responsibility for Final Decisions’; or ‘Sole Responsibility for Final Decisions’) (Q33). The results were analysed using the descriptive statistics function of SPSS and are presented in Table 5.11.

For the majority of participants it appears they have at the very least a ‘Right to be Heard/Advise’ in decision-making activities which affect their area of responsibility. In turn,
the small group of participants who indicated they had ‘Sole Responsibility for Final Decisions’ in their area of responsibility were mostly from the staffing subgroup ‘Deputy Directors/Research Directors’, as expected.

Table 5.11 Level of Participation in Decision-Making in Areas of Responsibility (n = 194)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Participation in Decision-Making</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Voice</td>
<td>7 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right of Information</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to Be Heard/Advise</td>
<td>36 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Participation in Reaching Decisions</td>
<td>65 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Responsibility for Final Decisions</td>
<td>72 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole Responsibility for Final Decisions</td>
<td>11 (6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between participants’ level of authority in decision-making and their profile characteristics; the results of which are shown in Table 5.12. The strength of participants’ ‘Professional Self-Concept’ (‘Moderate’ and ‘Strong’) was also tested. For this purpose and to avoid small cell counts, the two ends of the decision-making participation scale were collapsed into two categories becoming ‘Low Authority’ (combination of ‘No Voice’; ‘Right of Information’; ‘Right to be Heard/Advise’; and ‘A Participation in Reaching Decisions’); and ‘High Authority’ (combination of ‘Shared Responsibility for Final Decisions’ and ‘Sole Responsibility for Final Decisions’). Note the terms ‘Low Authority’ and ‘High Authority’ were used as the variable descriptors because the original six-point decision-making participation scale has been divided at the point at which participants who did not indicate a shared or solo responsibility for the ‘final’ decision (‘Low Authority’ over decisions made in their area of responsibility) were on the one side, and those that did indicate they had a role in the ‘final’ decision on the other (‘High Authority’ over decisions made in their area of responsibility).

As indicated in Table 5.12, there were findings of significance for participants’ salary levels ($p < .001$). The observed versus expected frequencies predictably indicated that participants at the lower salary ranges were more likely to have ‘Low Authority’, whilst participants at the higher salary ranges were more likely to have ‘High Authority’, over final decisions affecting their respective areas of responsibility. When controlled for gender, the salary range of participants continued to be of significance for both the males ($\chi^2 = 4.763, df = 1, p = .029$) and female participants ($\chi^2 = 11.814, df = 1, p = .001$). The education level of participants was also shown to be significant ($p = .001$). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that university qualified participants were more likely to have ‘High Authority’, whilst participants without university qualifications were more likely to have ‘Low Authority’, over final decisions.
affecting their workplace. When controlled for gender, the education level of participants was significant only for female participants ($\chi^2 = 9.027, \text{df} = 1, p = .003$), highlighting the earlier finding of an overrepresentation of females in the group of participants who were not university qualified.

| Table 5.12 Relationships between Decision-Making Authority and Participant Characteristics |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                | Level of Decision-Making Authority | Frequency (%) | Pearson Chi-Square |
|                                | Low Authority | High Authority | $\chi^2$ (df) | $p$            |
| Gender ($n = 194$)              |               |                |               |                |
| Male                           | 26 (51%)      | 25 (49%)       | 1.099 (1)     | .294           |
| Female                         | 85 (59%)      | 58 (41%)       |                |                |
| Education Level ($n = 194$)    |               |                |               |                |
| No University Qualifications   | 39 (78%)      | 11 (22%)       | 11.886 (1)    | .001           |
| University Qualifications      | 72 (50%)      | 72 (50%)       |                |                |
| Salary Level ($n = 194$)       |               |                |               |                |
| Lower (HEW 2-7)                | 75 (71%)      | 31 (29%)       | 17.496 (1)    | <.001          |
| Higher (HEW 8-10+)             | 36 (41%)      | 52 (59%)       |                |                |
| Main Staffing Subgroup ($n = 162$) |               |                |               |                |
| Deputy Director/Director        | 5 (25%)       | 15 (75%)       | 10.110 (4)    | .039           |
| RMA (Grants/Finance)            | 34 (64%)      | 19 (36%)       |                |                |
| RMA (Graduate Studies/Students) | 23 (62%)      | 14 (38%)       |                |                |
| RMA (Data/IT Systems)           | 19 (61%)      | 12 (39%)       |                |                |
| RMA (Ethics)                   | 12 (57%)      | (9 (43%)       |                |                |
| Career Alignment ($n = 168$)    |               |                | .982 (1)      | .322           |
| Research Services               | 57 (55%)      | 46 (45%)       |                |                |
| University Administration       | 41 (63%)      | 24 (37%)       |                |                |
| Previous Employment as an Academic ($n = 194$) |               |                | 6.732 (1)    | .009           |
| Yes                             | 25 (43%)      | 33 (57%)       |                |                |
| No                              | 86 (63%)      | 50 (37%)       |                |                |
| Strength of Professional Self-Concept ($n = 158$) |               |                | 2.973 (1)    | .085           |
| ‘Moderate’                      | 51 (63%)      | 30 (37%)       |                |                |
| ‘Strong’                        | 38 (49%)      | 39 (51%)       |                |                |

The chi-square results in Table 5.12 also highlight the finding of significance for participant staffing subgroup ($p = .039$). As expected, observed versus expected frequencies indicate that participants who were ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’ were more likely to have ‘High Authority’ over final decisions in their area of responsibility, than were participants from the remaining four main staffing subgroups. Previous employment as an academic was also found to be of significance ($p = .009$). Observed versus expected frequencies indicated that those with previous academic experience were much less likely to be in a situation in which they had ‘Low Authority’, and more likely to have ‘High Authority’, over the final decisions made in their area of responsibility with the reverse occurring for those participants who were not previously academics. When controlled for gender, previous experience as an academic was significant.
only for female participants ($\chi^2 = 4.641, df = 1, p = .031$), which may again be accounted for by the wider disparity in the education levels of female participants brought into focus in this ‘prior academic experience’ versus ‘no prior academic experience’ comparison. Lastly, as shown in Table 5.12, participants’ career alignment (‘Research Services’ versus ‘University Administration’) and the intensity of participants’ professional self-concept were not found to be of significance. The latter result is a particularly interesting finding given the links between autonomy and professionhood as briefly touched on in the opening chapter, and in Moore’s (1970) scale of professional characteristics as discussed in the next section.

**Decision-Making Characteristics**

As indicated in Table 5.1, the characteristics of participants’ workplace decision-making were examined. In this item the prevalence of the three facets of decision-making characteristics was measured via a six-point Likert scale (‘Not at All’; ‘Not Sure’; ‘Mildly’; ‘Moderately’; ‘Quite Strongly’; or ‘Very Strongly’), with different responses permitted across each facet. The results are shown in Figure 5.13. The bars on the graph follow the six original response categories, with the three decision-making characteristic measures presented by the highest to lowest majority of ‘Very Strongly’ responses.

![Figure 5.13 Prevalence of Decision-Making Characteristics in Workplace (n = 194)](image)

Figure 5.13 indicates a wide range of responses regarding the prevalence of the three types of decision-making characteristics. Drawing on these results when the upper-end categories of ‘Quite Strongly’ and ‘Very Strongly’ are combined, ‘Expertise and Specialist Knowledge’ was seen by just under 60 per cent of all questionnaire participants as being the typical decision-
making characteristic in their workplace, followed by ‘Hierarchy’ (44 per cent) and then by ‘Consensus’ (28 per cent). These findings add weight to those reported earlier on level of participation in decision-making, in which it was found that a participant’s salary (corresponding to the ‘Hierarchy’ characteristic) and education level (corresponding to ‘Expertise and Specialist Knowledge’ characteristic) were significant in relation to the level of their decision-making authority.

Following on from these findings, whilst there is an emerging RMA professional body in evidence, the issue of professional autonomy may prove to be problematic in the case for professional recognition and this has been previously noted by others (Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009). This is particularly evident in the instance of research services staff, given the organisationally-bounded nature of the work of this group and more specifically, with regards to their role in the administering of government and other regulatory bodies compliance and legislative requirements. However, there is an opening here at the more senior levels of RMA where specialty skills come into play, including the teaching of grantsmanship and the responsibility for the education of early career researchers; for examples, see Chapter 6 for the findings on participant roles and responsibilities.

**Degree of Professional Alignment**

*Profession – a Contested Notion*

As indicated in the study’s literature review, it has been said that university research administration falls short of being eligible for recognition as a profession when viewed through a traditional lens (Atkinson, et al., 2007); however, what constitutes a ‘profession’ continues to be contested in the literature. For example, when viewing the notion of professionhood in relation to the increasingly complex nature of modern day life, it has been stated that:

> Modern life, we may observe, is one of contrasting and alternative discourses. And these discourses slide across each other. Consequently, the very ideas of ‘profession’, ‘professionalism’ and ‘professional life’ fade from view and even dissolve, as they are overtaken by other swifter currents… (Barnett, 2008, p. 192)

Further, along a similar vein:

> …more recent sociological perspectives on professionalism have rejected such normative notions on what it means to be a professional. Instead they see professionalism as a
shifting phenomenon – a profession, they suggest is whatever people think it is at any particular time… (Hanlon 1998, as cited in Whitty, 2008, p. 32).

Whilst in offering an historical overview of professionalism, Crook stated that:

Disappointingly, perhaps, the application of historical perspectives confirms professionalism to be an artificial construct, with everchanging and always contested definitions and traits. In times of late or postmodernity, some may wish to argue that we can all – dog walkers and landscape gardeners no less than solicitors and archbishops – be professionals if we want to be professionals, and if we conduct ourselves in a manner that seems to be professional… (2008, p. 23).

Notwithstanding these and other similar and/or contrasting viewpoints, Barnett also stated that:

The challenge to professionalism lies in the handling of multiple discourses… the task of professionalism lies in the critical deployment of discourse… the achievement of professionalism lies in discursive creation… (2008, p. 190).

How ‘a profession’ emerges and professionalisation occurs has been the subject of discussion and analysis for decades. Given the complexities that are inherent in these topics, multiple approaches can be instructive, especially in getting a sense of the ‘state-of-play’ for a particular group. To this end, the author has found Moore’s (1970) professional scale to be helpful, acknowledging that such an approach is not without limitations and should not be used in isolation. The analysis that follows is intended to contribute to a strategic dialogue in a situation where the author has found very patchy levels of professional self-conceptualisation.

The importance of strategic dialogue to the process of professional socialisation was highlighted by Watson-Broome in her qualitative study of 431 library practitioners (who were alumni (ALUMS) of eight American liberal arts colleges):

As they became socialized as members within their profession, they took on roles associated with that profession. By first learning the attributes of the profession (anticipatory socialization), then incorporating them (transitional socialization), and finally by displaying and utilizing them (professional socialization), the ALUMS changed themselves. In addition to the personal roles or identities they may have…, the Alums also now had a career or professional identity (2007, pp. 260 - 261).
Professional Scale

Moore (1970) suggested a scale as opposed to a ‘cluster of attributes’ as a way of understanding the ‘…process of status enhancement…’ (p. 5). According to Moore (1970), each of these scale items (and their parts) are not of equal value but the further the progression along the scale the greater the claim of professionhood. His scale consisted of six key areas (‘Full Time Position’ ‘Calling’; ‘Organisation (and its sub-elements)’; ‘Training and Education’; ‘Exhibit a Service Orientation’; and ‘Level of Authority’), which are juxtaposed against a summary of the study’s findings in these areas as depicted in Table 5.14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moore’s (1970) Professional Scale</th>
<th>Participant Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Full Time Position’</td>
<td>It has been assumed for the purposes of this study that for a majority of participants their university research services position was their primary occupation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Calling’</td>
<td>Some participants indicated the reason they worked for universities in general or for the research office in particular was in order to support the research endeavour/university work, thereby, contributing to the community/society; however, no participant indicated that university research administration was an initial career choice (see: Chapter 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Organisation’</td>
<td>Creation of the Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS) in 1999. ARMS is currently working on a body of knowledge and accreditation processes with no current form of certification (see: Chapter 1). Note only 61 per cent of participants are members of professional associations 96 of which are members of ARMS indicating a significant membership gap in terms of the overall participant group. There is currently no certification or accreditation processes for Australian RMA (see this chapter).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Education and Training’</td>
<td>One-quarter of participants were not university qualified. Only 12 per cent of employees required minimum of postgraduate qualifications and 31 per cent did not require university level qualifications – the balance required a bachelor degree as a minimum (see Chapter 3). Plus poor uptake of professional development activities (see this chapter).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Exhibit a “Service Orientation”’</td>
<td>Strong facet of the administration character displayed by this participant group in the analysis of their roles, responsibilities and performance expectations and accountabilities (see Chapter 6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘(The Professional) Proceeds by his Own Judgement or Authority’</td>
<td>The vast majority of participants have at least a ‘right to be heard/advise’ in decision-making activities which affect their work. Participants’ salary and education levels play a significant role in the degree of decision-making authority (see this chapter).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drawing on Moore in the manner undertaken above, it has been possible to set the findings in this chapter in sharp relief. The aspirations and professional understandings of this group are
diverse and very much linked to what they are doing personally. There is an emerging sense of a collective future, but it really depends on role and position. In a classical sense, across dimensions of ‘calling’, ‘organisation, ‘education and training’ and professional orientation, the RMA participant group are not a close fit with the classical indicators of the expectations of a profession. Nor is there a strong sense that the majority would want to be.

Specifically highlighted, and important elements in a strategic dialogue would be: current gaps in participants’ education levels; the organisational-boundedness of RMA work (in terms of decision-making authority), particularly given the strong regulatory frameworks in which they perform their roles; plus the still-early developmental phase of ARMS, which arguably hampers the fuller professional development and training of this occupational group.

Conversely, the prominent service character of this group is clearly a strength, which has been noted by others who have presented the RMA occupational group as a ‘service’ profession (Atkinson, et al., 2007; D. R. L. Campbell, 2010; Vargas & Hanlon, 2007). This ‘service’ focus is explored in more detail in Chapter 6 in the discussion on participants’ accountabilities and performance expectations. Despite the identified ‘shortfalls’ in participants’ professional characteristics, there remains sufficient evidence to confirm earlier reports as discussed in the opening chapter, that a level of professionalisation of the RMA occupational group is occurring at the individual, group, institutional, national and international level.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Hours of Professional Development**

Questionnaire participants were asked what hours of professional training and development they undertook annually (Q25), using four response categories of: ‘Nil’, ‘Less than 30 hours’, ‘30 hours’ or ‘More than 30 hours’. Thirty hours of professional development per annum was used as a benchmark for this item, given it has been described as the required minimum amount of time for an individual to sustain professional currency (ATEM Executive, 2010). The results shown in Table 5.15 highlight the finding that more than three-quarters of participants either did less than 30 professional development hours annually or undertook no professional development activities.
Chi-square tests conducted to test for relationships between the amount of professional development hours undertaken annually by participants and their gender, was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 13.095$, df = 3, $p = .004$). Observed versus expected frequencies highlighted the finding that female participants were less likely than the males to undergo professional development training. This difference is particularly striking at the upper end of the development spectrum, with only 10 per cent of female participants undertaking more than 30 hours professional development training each year compared to 29 per cent of the males. Further tests of significance on gender when controlled for salary and/or education level could not be performed given low cell counts.

Chi-square tests conducted to test for relationships between the strength of participants’ professional self-concept (‘Moderate’ versus ‘Strong’) and the amount of professional development hours they undertook was also found to be of significance ($\chi^2 = 12.394$, df = 3, $p = .006$). Based on observed versus expected frequencies, those participants who indicated they did no hours of professional training were more likely to indicate a ‘Moderate’ degree of professional self-concept, whilst those who undertook more than 30 hours were more likely to indicate a ‘Strong’ professional self-concept, as could reasonably be expected. Putting these findings to one side – it must be noted that at the time this study was conducted there were little to no professional training programs being offered for this group by ARMS, and those offered by ATEM for main-stream university administrative staff may not have specifically met RMA training requirements.

There were no findings of significance in a chi-square test conducted to test for a relationship between ARMS and non-ARMS participants and the number of professional development hours they undertook per annum. Participants’ education levels (‘No University Qualifications’ versus ‘University Qualifications’) and salary levels (‘Lower (HEW 2-7)’ and ‘Higher (HEW 8-10+)’) were also not significant in relation to the hours of professional development undertaken.

**Professional Development Expectations**

Participants were asked directly about what they believed a newcomer to an RMA position equivalent to their own should do in respect to professional development activities (Q48d).
There were 173 valid short-answer responses, and these were entered into *QSR.NVivo* 8 and analysed for common categories. Once established, the response categories (as shown in Figure 5.16) were initially analysed by frequency, noting that responses may be coded to more than one category. The highest to lowest occurrence of mention for each of the 11 resultant categories appears in Figure 5.16 calculated as a percentage of occurrences (total count) of mention. Seventeen per cent of the responses, for example, were about recommend training in technology.

![Figure 5.16 Recommended Forms of Professional Development by Occurrence (n = 281)](image)

As the responses indicate, the noted emphases of participants were in the areas of technology, continuing professional development and soft-skills development; recognising that the response groupings could be described as being: content related; to do with methods (for example: seminars); or about the level of importance of professional development. Of note is that few suggested upgrading educational qualifications.

What follows is an examination of these 11 areas of response ordered by highest to lowest occurrence of mention. Subsequent to the establishment of the 11 response categories, each of these common response forms was stratified by participant characteristics using the *QSR.NVivo* 8 matrix coding query function. This analysis helped to determine whether or not a recommended area of professional development was favoured by participants from a particular
staffing subgroup, qualification level or salary level. Where a cluster or predominance of responses has been found to have some bearing on the selected participant characteristics then comments to that effect have been made under the appropriate response category.

Given the participant responses to this questionnaire item were typically in dot point form or were quite brief, it has at times made it difficult to indicate a numeric breakdown of responses beyond the initial occurrence of mention whilst still maintaining a logical flow. When this has occurred, the participant responses in that response category have been summarised and presented in the form of an overview. Occurrence (total count) of mention is included in brackets.

**Technology (n = 47)**

Responses in this category consisted mainly about the need for participants to: continually update their computer skills (n = 15); or undertake ongoing training in specific university platforms such as student systems, database systems or forms of electronic records management (n = 8); or keep abreast of information technology or technological developments (including computer program or software changes) (n = 7). Regarding office computer skills, participants referred to the need to be proficient in Microsoft Office ® software including Excel ®, advanced Microsoft Word ® or MacWord and Power Point ®, and to a lesser extent project management software, as well as being able to integrate web forms with databases. Specific IT systems mentioned in the above recommendations included SQL, Research Management and Research Information Systems and database software programs such as ORACLE.

At the more sophisticated technological level, 23 of the responses were about the need for participants to focus on updating or maintaining their management information of system skills. With the remaining responses (n = 5) focused on: the ongoing development of software solutions to information management needs; the addressing of compliance requests; and the enhancement of work practices including the effective delivery of educative programs. (Note the participants in the technology category may have chosen one or more of the skills specified herein, hence the number of individual responses adds to more than the original occurrence of mention for this response category).

Understandably, this was the most frequently coded category of responses to the original questionnaire item for ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ participants.
Importance of Professional Development \((n = 46)\)

This response category very simply was about the importance of undertaking forms of professional and/or personal development, with a quarter of the responses highlighting the importance of ongoing learning. Some specific reasons given by participants on the importance of undertaking various forms of professional development were that such activities could be used by the individual: as a stepping stone for career advancement; to advance personal and professional skills; to aid in their successful performance of day-to-day work; or to maintain currency in the field. For those participants with no university level qualification, this was the most common category.

Soft-Skills Development \((n = 40)\)

Communication skills development was recommended by nearly a third of participants in this category, followed closely by: negotiation skills \((n = 9)\); mediation and conflict resolution (including how to deal with difficult people) \((n = 7)\); plus, time management skills (including work process improvement, organisational skills and personal effectiveness) \((n = 7)\). Other recommended ‘soft skills’ were: the ability to take initiative, including being able to self-learn \((n = 6)\); leadership development \((n = 5)\); management and supervision skills \((n = 5)\); writing and presentation skills \((n = 5)\); and, team and relationship building, including the ability to understand cultural differences \((n = 3)\). As an interesting aside, no participants from the staffing subgroup ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ made any of the recommendations coded to this response category. (Note the participants in this category may have chosen one or more of the skills specified herein, hence the number of individual responses adds to more than the original occurrence of mention for this response category).

Specific Training or Courses \((n = 38)\)

Intellectual Property (IP) and contracts management \((n = 16)\) featured the most strongly in the responses under this category, followed by training in commercialisation (including technology transfer) \((n = 7)\). Of the five staffing subgroups only participants from the staffing subgroup of ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’ or ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’ indicated recommended training in these areas. Project management, financial management and postgraduate qualifications in research management were the next most prominent responses with between three to five participants each. The remaining recommendations were from one or two individual participants and included training in: statistics; human ethics; public relations; policy development; insurance; law; information systems; general administration; and CPA professional development programs.
Broaden Outlook \((n = 22)\)
This response category encompassed various recommendations regarding the need for RMAs to: broaden their outlook and be aware of changes at the sectoral level, including developments in government policy and legislative frameworks; keep abreast of international research trends, politics and software; be cognisant of university structure and policy frameworks; and to be aware of future trends and their implications. In short, participants’ recommendations were for RMAs to be aware of what was going on around them at the international, national, sectoral and institutional level.

The importance of exposure to more than one area of research support (and/or to all aspects of research) was also flagged by a small number of participants. Of interest here is that more than half of the 22 participants in this response category were drawn from the staffing subgroups of ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’ and ‘RMA (Graduate Studies/Students)’, whilst nine of the 22 responses were from HDR qualified participants.

Conferences, Seminars and Workshops \((n = 21)\)
Attendance (and participation as recommended by some) at conferences, seminars or workshops was recommended for a number of reasons including: to keep abreast of emerging issues; to be exposed to the latest approaches in management and leadership; to update or maintain skills; and to be informed of changing legislature or policy and related matters. Attendance and/or participation at: ARMS conferences; PRATS (now ARTA) meetings; AEC workshops; and funding agency conferences (with ARC and NHMRC seminars being specifically mentioned in the recommendations).

Keep Up-to-Date \((n = 21)\)
Participants recommended keeping up-to-date with a range of issues, most of which could be traced back to the specific staffing subgroup which they belonged to. For example: changes to grant schemes both within the university and external to it (‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’); changes to software and reporting or statistical systems (‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’); and overview of ethics changes and related legislation (‘RMA (Ethics)’).

Networking \((n = 21)\)
Networking was recommended for three main reasons: first, as a form of peer support (‘...to know you are not alone…’ (32138)); second, to enable RMA staff to benchmark practices or be aware of ‘best practices’ across the sector or to make connections to workshop resolution to similar issues; and third, to gain a broader understanding of the sector through staff exchanges or secondments.
Do Not Worry! \((n = 9)\)
Responses under this category indicated either not to worry about the issue of professional development activities at all or there was never enough time to undertake them anyway. This response category, however, appeared to constitute a minority view.

Professional Associations \((n = 8)\)
A number of participants suggested the need to attend training sessions and other functions provided by professional associations and groups, including participation in conferences. Keeping up with the literature or newsletters of such bodies was also seen to be useful. However, there were a small number with contrary opinions, who indicated their association with professional associations had constituted a waste of their time.

On-the-Job Training \((n = 8)\)
This response category reflected a number of viewpoints, for example, that everyday work is sufficient for development or that there is a lack of suitable training vehicles (or appropriate workplace support for professional development). The latter situation resulting in participants having either to rely on the work itself for their development or to rely on their own initiative and/or networking for their developmental needs.

Workplace Development Opportunities
The extent to which participants were satisfied with the opportunities available to them in their respective workplaces for: advancement or promotion \((Q43a)\); further training and development \((Q43b)\); and associating with their peers from other universities or research institutions \((Q43c)\), was examined with the use of a five-point Likert scale (‘Very Unsatisfactory’, ‘Unsatisfactory’, ‘Undecided’, ‘Satisfactory’, and ‘Very Satisfactory’). The results are presented in Table 5.17.

Chi-square tests were conducted to see what effect participant characteristics had on whether or not they were satisfied with the workplace opportunities available to them in relation to: ‘Advancement and Promotion’; ‘Training and Development’; and ‘Peer Networking’. For this purpose and to avoid small cell counts, the two ends of each Likert scale were collapsed into two categories becoming ‘Satisfactory’ (combination of ‘Satisfactory’ and ‘Very Satisfactory’) and ‘Unsatisfactory’ (combination of ‘Unsatisfactory’ and ‘Very Unsatisfactory’). The response category of ‘Undecided’ was set aside for this series of statistical analyses.
Gender was not found to be of significance in relation to whether or not participants were satisfied with their opportunities in each of the three areas, nor was participants’ level of qualification or staffing subgroup. Salary level was also found to be of no significance in participants’ satisfaction levels with the opportunities available to them for ‘Advancement and Promotion’. However, participants’ salary levels were found to be of significance in the reported satisfaction levels regarding ‘Training and Development’ opportunities ($\chi^2 = 9.870, df = 3, p = .020$) and ‘Peer Networking’ ($\chi^2 = 11.547, df = 3, p = .009$).

Based on observed versus expected frequencies, those on a HEW 8 or higher salary range were more likely to indicate satisfaction and less likely to indicate dissatisfaction with workplace opportunities available to them for ‘Training and Development’ and ‘Peer Networking’, than those participants on a HEW 7 salary range or lower. Further data stratification of participant characteristics was not possible due to low cell counts. These findings highlight the importance of supported and enabled grassroots networking vehicles, such as the ARTA group, whilst underlining the need for universities and ARMS, in particular, to concentrate more effort on building up the professional capacities of their more junior RMA staff with increased access to suitable training, development and networking activities.

**Professional Development and the Developing RMA Profession**

Campbell (2010) highlighted the crucial connection between the ongoing role of professional development and the future development of the RMA profession, underpinned by need for the
development of a universal body of knowledge and a systematised curriculum for this occupational group. In his research, Campbell (2010) conducted a thematic analysis of the field of USA research administration by examining articles published in the journals referred to in the opening chapter of the SRA International and the NCURA, namely: The Journal of Research Administration and the Research Management Review Journal, respectively. In his comprehensive review of these two journals, some articles of which dated back to 1969, Campbell reached the conclusion that:

From a theory based standpoint, the (RMA) profession has not yet evolved to the point where a universal theory for general education in research administration can be developed (2010, p. 44);

and further that,

As a service profession, research administration is more technical and solution oriented than process based. As a relatively new profession, research administration has not yet established the fundamental and universally accepted curriculum that is necessary to train future administrators…The profession must continue to strive for a clear and comprehensive training and education program so that as a profession, research administration has a common starting point for all practitioners, new and seasoned (D. R. L. Campbell, 2010, pp. 47-48).

In a similar vein, Cuthbert and Langley (2010) highlighted the need to underpin the development of emerging professional groups in the higher education sector (of which the RMA occupational group is an example) with postgraduate programs designed to:

…support not only individual professional development but also the development of recognizable professional or semi-professional associations (p. 1).

The aim of the authors in developing such programs which they discussed in their conference presentation, was to ‘…move away from short-cycle training towards longer-term education and professional formation programmes…’ (Cuthbert & Langley, 2010, p. 2). In a recent related article, Langley (2012, p. 76) made the case that the RMA profession: ‘…has reached a point of maturity that there is a need for postgraduate and Master’s-level opportunities to be created…’; with examples given of early-stage development of such programs in both the USA and the UK.
In Australia, there are a number of university qualifications that have been developed to provide a credentialed pathway of advancement for university professional staff, as described in an ATEM commissioned report (Massaro Consulting Pty Ltd, 2008). However, the report noted gaps and a lack of a systematised approach in this area (Massaro Consulting Pty Ltd, 2008). Although Australian RMA have access to these pathways to address their professional development needs in a general sense, there is little in the way of tailored university course offerings. For example, in 2012, several university level courses were offered in Australia pertinent to research management, however, these courses may have had the development needs of academic research managers more in mind. These courses include the: Graduate Certificate in Research Management offered by Southern Cross University; Graduate Certificate in Research Commercialisation and a Masters of Research and Development Management by e-Grad School (Australia) (a collective of ATN universities); Masters in Research and Research Management through Curtin University; and Masters of Research and Development Management at the Queensland University of Technology.

The creation of the LH Martin Institute (hereafter referred to as LHMI) has galvanized further advancement in the range and depth of professional development program offerings for those who work in the Australian tertiary education sector. The LHMI, also known as the National Institute for Tertiary Education Leadership and Management, is funded by DIISRTE and is based in the University of Melbourne. This institute has made formal collaborative linkages with professional groups such as ATEM, with the aim of being the ‘…provider of choice for tailored and contextualised management and leadership…’ professional development programs for the sector (Goedegebuure, 2012, p. 1). It is assumed by the author that at some future point, a collaborative partnership between the LHMI and ARMS is likely to be established, in the same manner as the current partnership between LHMI and ATEM. The potential partnership would ideally support more tailored course development for the RMA group with the assumption that there may be a degree of demand by RMA if they are suitably targeted.

The material provided in this section and throughout the chapter has illustrated that the issue of RMA education, training, and further professional development, is an evolving one which is of direct importance and relevance to the further professionalisation of the RMA occupational group.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

One of the key aims of this project has been to explore the professional expectations and understandings of RMA; if they believe they are members of a ‘profession’ and how far they
have moved down that path, if at all. The interest has in part been raised by the actions and interests of groups such as ARMS in Australia, but also by the inexorable push towards research excellence and research growth in Australian universities. This chapter has revealed that:

- There does not appear to be a collective sense amongst participants of ‘being in’ or ‘becoming’ a professional group, with uneven levels of professional self-conceptualisation reported,
- A majority of participants perceive that there is: a lack of professional recognition of RMA; a poor understanding of RMA roles; plus, an undervaluing of RMA workplace contribution, by academics in particular,
- Only half of all participants were ARMS members, the majority of whom were at the higher end of the spectrum in terms of their salary and education levels, thereby indicating a professionalisation gap for the more inexperienced/junior RMA,
- Only the most senior RMA reported a high degree of authority in workplace decision-making, underlining the organisationally-bounded nature of RMA work which is focused to a large extent with responsibilities for administering and ensuring institutional compliance with legislative and regulatory frameworks,
- The poor uptake of professional development activities, which together with the earlier reported finding that one-quarter of participants were not university qualified, highlighted shortfalls in expected educational minimums for RMA to reach or to maintain professional currency,
- The developmental opportunities of RMA are somewhat hampered by the still-early development phase of ARMS, although this situation is changing.

These findings and their implications, together with a review of overseas comparisons to be drawn in this subject area, will be revisited in Chapter 9.

The next chapter focuses on the roles and responsibilities of the participant group, including their accountabilities and performance expectations. It also explores the changing nature of RMA work from participant perspectives.
CHAPTER 6
ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

As indicated in the opening chapter, there is an ever-growing international emphasis, scrutiny and reliance on high-quality RMA work as evidenced by the report to the European Commission on aspects of university research activity in which the authors stated that:

… the ambition for excellence in research applies equally as strongly to research management…Research management excellence is needed both at a strategic level – doing the right things – and at an operational level – doing things right… (Expert Group, 2008, pp. 8 - 9).

Correspondingly, RMA work was found to be specialising and growing in complexity, with early writings in this area indicating that RMA was an emergent global profession. This chapter moves into the area of participant roles and responsibilities in the context of a changing university environment. It provides a depth of detail hitherto unreported in the field, and includes participant perspectives regarding the performance and accountability expectations placed on them. The chapter begins with participant perspectives on the changes that impact on their work and then proceeds to explore functions, beginning with the development of role descriptions; the ultimate goal being to provide a framework that assists in the codification of occupational practices. The latter is particularly important because the lack of clarity in practices has been found to inhibit the process of professionalisation. The chapter proceeds into a brief clarification of role complexity, and then extends in depth on workplace accountability, finishing with an overview of a typical working week.

In Chapter 2 the foundational nature of the inquiry was identified. The design is constructed to produce as comprehensive a picture of RMA in Australia as possible, and to support this with in-depth data collection about the nature of the work and how the participants perceive, and feel about their roles. There are elements of the data that capture a particular point in time (a snapshot), and other elements that capture continuity and change. By drawing on the experiences of RMA across the sector and across all subgroups, and making what they do visible, the intention was that this study would have extended usefulness; not only as a point of historical reference, but for use in future planning and professional development. This and later chapters are increasingly directed toward providing an evidence base for the latter.
Table 6.1 summarises the thematic structure of the chapter, together with the research questions posed and corresponding data source. For ease of reference, the questionnaire items can be found in Appendix E and the interview items in Appendix H.

**Table 6.1 Overview of Chapter’s Thematic Structure, Items and Response Rate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMATIC STRUCTURE</th>
<th>ITEMS AND RESPONSE RATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **PERCEIVED CHANGES TO RMA WORK** | This section presents participant \( n = 194 \) responses to the questionnaire item:  
Q49a) How much do you think the roles in Research Services have changed over the past five years?  
Also presented are interviewee \( n = 37 \) responses to the following first-round interview question:  
Q4) What do you believe have been the major changes to the work of research services staff over the past five years? |
| **RMA WORK FUNCTIONS** | In this section Broad Statements of Responsibility developed for each of the staffing subgroups stratified by salary levels and reporting lines are discussed in overview. These statements draw on participant \( n = 194 \) answers to the questionnaire item:  
Q31) Please provide a brief role description of your current position. |
| **RMA WORK PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITIES** | This section presents participant \( n = 194 \) responses to four questionnaire items:  
Q44) In your current role, what do you think you are held most accountable for?  
Q45) What do you most strive to achieve in terms of performance in your role and why?  
Q46) What aspect of your role is the most difficult to achieve and why?  
Q47) What aspect of your role is the least difficult to achieve and why? |
| **PERSPECTIVES OF RMA WORK** | This section presents interviewee \( n = 37 \) responses to three first-round interview items:  
Q2) What is it like in your job?  
Q3) Describe a typical week at work for you.  
Q8) If you were to bring one thing to the attention of others in your workplace about any aspect of your work or any aspect of research services administration – what would it be? |

**PERCEIVED CHANGES IN RMA WORK**

**Degree of Change**

As indicated in Table 6.1, questionnaire participants were asked whether or not Research Services roles had changed over the past five years (the period in question being 2002-2006) using a five-point Likert scale (‘Not Sure’, ‘Not At All’, ‘A Little’, ‘Some’ or ‘A Lot’). The responses were analysed using the descriptive statistics function of SPSS, with the results in Table 6.2 showing that three-quarters of all participants indicated research service roles had
changed at least ‘A Little’; and the dominant response category indicating they had changed ‘A Lot’. Of note, 57 per cent of the 42 participants who indicated they were ‘Not Sure’ about the degree of change in RMA roles had worked in research services for five or fewer years.

Table 6.2 Degree of Perceived Change in Research Service Roles in the Past Five Years (n = 194)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
<td>42 (22%)</td>
<td>18 (9%)</td>
<td>42 (22%)</td>
<td>86 (44%)</td>
<td>194(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When reviewed by the five main staffing subgroups as shown in Table 6.3, it would appear that in percentage terms the degree to which research service roles were perceived to have changed were highest for the ‘Deputy Director/Director’ staffing subgroup, followed by ‘RMA (Ethics)’.

Table 6.3 Degree of Perceived Change in Research Service Roles in the Past Five Years by Main Staffing Subgroups (n = 162)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staffing Subgroup</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Not At All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA(Grants/Finance)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Data/IT Systems)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Ethics)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Director/Director</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workplace Changes

As described in Table 6.1, the study’s 37 interviewees were asked what they thought had been the major changes to the work of research services staff over the preceding five years. Each of the transcribed answers were entered into QSR.NVivo 8 and analysed for common themes. Themes identified from the responses are in the form of six change drivers and their associated effects, noting that these change drivers may also have cumulative and interactive effects over a range of workplace factors and/or behaviours that may not have been articulated by participants. These themes are: ‘Government Policy Drivers and Increased Regulatory Compliance’; ‘Quality Assurance, Accountability Mechanisms and Increasing Reporting Requirements’; ‘Increased Work Volume and Workload/Resourcing Impacts’; ‘Shifts in RMA Role (Specialisations) and Increased RMA Performance Expectations’; ‘Increased Research Competition and Changing Researcher Behaviour’; and ‘Technological Advances and Increased Online Processing’. What
follows is a summary explanation of each of these six drivers and their effects from participant perspectives, with quotations drawn from the interview transcripts provided as illustration. These findings provide detail to the earlier reported questionnaire findings, in which a majority of participants pointed to a high-degree of workplace change taking place.

**Government Policy Drivers and Increased Regulatory Compliance**

DEST (now DIISRTE) was seen by a number of interviewees to be a major driver of change in research services work, through the instigation and delivery of higher education policy initiatives and policy shifts. The main examples given at interview of significant DEST (DIISRTE) led policy changes were the 2002 enactment of the Research Training Scheme (hereafter referred to as the RTS\(^{17}\)), the introduction of the Commonwealth’s Commercialisation Training Scheme (the funding of which ceased in December 2012), plus the RQF (which has subsequently been replaced by the ERA). The RTS was described in the interviews as a policy shift which resulted in: increased pressure on student completions and supervisory performance; enhancement of doctoral programs and delivery; increased training of supervisors; introduction of rights and expectations of HDR students; and increased generic skills requirement for HDR students. This policy was seen by a participant to have had the cumulative effect of ‘… changing the nature of the research degree…’ (1237).

The flow-on impacts of government policies and initiatives were seen by a number of interviewees to have led to an ever-growing regulatory compliance environment surrounding research in the form of increased: regulations; research-related bureaucracy, particularly with project-based research projects; ethics legislation; institutional policies, rules, guidelines and documented procedures; complexity in granting schemes; plus compliance focused administrative and reporting requirements. In the words of interviewees:

> The growth of the compliance environment is pretty striking…and that extends not just to grant applications and grant administration but things like ethics as well…that is probably the most significant change I have seen in the sector as a whole… (1227).

> …there is an increased focus…within research services, on compliance so although we still try to do some development work…assist people to really develop high quality applications, there is a bit of an increased focus on compliance issues. So the job of research services is …to ensure that the applicant is not going to knock themselves out by putting in a non-conforming application… (1229).

\(^{17}\) The Australian Federal Government’s ‘Research Training Scheme’ (RTS) provides annual block grants to higher education providers to support research training for HDR students.
Quality Assurance, Accountability Mechanisms and Increasing Reporting Requirements

Increased accountability and quality demands from a range of stakeholders, including the requirements of the Australian University Quality Agency\textsuperscript{18} (hereafter referred to as AUQA), were raised as key workplace changes. According to one interviewee:

The whole quality assurance and accountability push, the Research Training Scheme …I think that was enormous and it took the university and probably most universities a couple of years to come to terms with that, so that was a major change. The AUQA process, which again was huge for this university – just the whole emphasis on not only having policies but realising that people need to know about them too, and we need to be able to report and we need to be able to show that we meet standards… (1233).

The flow-on effects of this ‘quality assurance and accountability push’ has significantly increased government and other granting bodies’ reporting requirements and reporting standards; plus increased post-award requirements (reporting in particular). Examples of increased accountabilities given at interview included: every grant now comes with a contract (for example: ‘… every collaboration needs to be covered by an IP agreement or something like that…’ (1224)); contracts have become increasingly complicated; and, there were increased academic/research/industry partnerships that required a high degree of formalisation with a growing range of contractualised obligations. There was also the issue of the advent of research-output accountability as exemplified in the following quotation:

I guess having to be accountable for the research output of the faculty… we really need to …keep tabs on all of the research and teaching staff and what they are doing. I do not think that universities have really had to do that in such a comprehensive way before, so…that has changed and the methods of collection have changed… (academics)… are used to the idea of needing to get assessment in terms of their teaching they are not used to the idea of the same for research. So it’s a very new concept, so that is a major change… (1206).

Greater accountability was also applied to research services work by the changing nature of student demand and expectation for greater levels of information, for example:

\textsuperscript{18} AUQA was replaced by the new Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) from January 2012 following the Review of Australian Higher Education (the Bradley Review).
I suppose students are much more aware of their rights and therefore and we want to be able to respond to their needs as well so providing information to them…(consequently) we provide a whole lot of support workshops for research degree students and that has grown enormously in the last five years (1237).

In turn, the associated growth in reporting requirements has been identified in the interviews as a significant workplace change:

…with the changes that there have been with DEST… and the ARC for research grants in the last five years and maybe slightly longer than five years, the level of reporting is just unbelievable now, we have to account for absolutely everything…with each research project you do not just…write down the name of the project and the researcher and at the end of the year give a report to DEST for how much overall income. You are being asked to report against: demographics;... research areas;...research income;...types of income;... commercialisation and intellectual property management…There are just so many more things that we need to gather data on and report on now and we are being asked more often for reports…out of the blue I’ve got two reports sitting on my desk at the moment that I have to run off, one of which I knew about, the other of which I did not… different government agencies that are trying to set up databases that want us to do a report for them…It’s much more bureaucratic than it used to be and researchers take on some of that responsibility as part of project management but there is an awful lot more of the sort of overall grants management that sits back into the research office. So I think over the last five years the administration, or the ‘administrivia’ as researchers call it, has easily doubled…to see the change in the level of reporting over that period is…quite phenomenal (1207).

*Increased Work Volume and Workload/Resourcing Impacts*

The first two identified change drivers and their associated effects have had a direct impact on RMA workloads. A further factor has been increased work volumes arising from changing academic researcher behaviour in the form of higher numbers of grant applications and the related flow-on effects of same, all of which has led to an increased focus on workplace productivity. This focus is expressed in the high numbers of participants who indicated that ‘efficiency’ was their most important performance measure in terms of their workplace accountabilities, as will be shown later in this chapter in the section entitled: ‘Work Performance and Accountabilities’.
An important flow-on effect of a lack of matching funding/resources in keeping with the growing RMA workloads has been the situation in which some interviewees were suggesting that perhaps research services support areas were not keeping pace with increased research activity and accountability demands. This has resulted in a number of research service offices rethinking their support strategy for academic researchers, including the option of moving from ‘one-on-one helping’ (or universal service delivery) to more strategically focused support that is targeted more selectively. It was further expressed that the RQF, with its associated workload and researcher performance expectations, would have the effect of bringing these types of operational considerations to the fore. For example:

…I think the other thing we are seeing because of the RQF again, is a huge rise in the commitment and interest and involvement of researchers in applying for research funding and the consequences of that for us are of course increased numbers of applications, increased numbers of …anxious researchers trying to get absolutely everything perfectly right and yes it’s our job to supply that but when you have got a 20 per cent increase in activity without a 20 per cent increase in resources, you know something has got to give and as a result I suspect that what we are going to have to do is look at lowering our service levels. Unfortunately that is the only answer because there is certainly no more resources coming our way…we are just on the…tipping point of that now, where we are just going to have to pull our heads in and stop promising people full feedback and review even though they need it, because we just cannot do it… (1232).

In addition, the changing nature of workplace communication driven by the increasing focus on electronic communication has led to situations of email overload, with the attendant expectation of instant response and action having significant workload impacts as discussed in Chapter 7.

**Shifts in RMA Role (Specialisations) and Increased RMA Performance Expectations**

Interviewees discussed the increasing expectations of the role of research services offices and the individual research administrator, with some interviewees indicating a trend of increasing professionalisation of their role and the research office; while others reported increases in the expertise and specialisation demanded of a research administrator. For example:

I suppose that there is two things there… a change has represented the growing of a new profession which now has a need and that need is for upskilling many of the ARMS members to become I suppose more proactive in thinking and in helping the research community in-house. If I was to turn… back the clock to say five years ago… it really was
a very reactionary job…it has (since) become far more brokered as competition increases
and intensifies and research opportunities funding or government funding may be
diminishing in real terms…and so all of that means that the research manager has to be a
facilitator and …proactively value-adding I suppose to research of the university by
sourcing, facilitating, coordinating, assembling research groupings to take advantage of
some of that. I think that was actually quite a significant change…there is a different skill
set, there is a sort of sea change happening, so I think that the …research community
themselves actually have an understanding now that research management is a value-
added part of their own research effort I suppose (1103).

In a similar vein, part of the changing direction and specialisation in the research service group
as identified in the interviews has been in the area of research development, as is evident in the
following participant’s perspective:

…in my office the major change has been a move away from an office which was very,
very much focused on that traditional helping with grant applications and grant
administration role, the sort of very traditional administrative office for research, into a
much more strategic and policy oriented office…and I guess the two things go together
because I see the future of the office as being more at that higher level. There will always
be people who help with and administer grants but I think that the best value-add we can
give is at a higher level and (recently) I have employed a research development team
whose role is to go out and find money for bigger projects, and to find partners. It’s a
different kind of role and I think that is probably where we all need to look towards
(1227).

Increased Research Competition and Changing Researcher Behaviour

A number of interviewees indicated that universities have had to operate in a far more
competitive environment. Consequently, universities have to be more proactive in gaining
external funding, with correspondingly increased pressure on academic staff to be ‘research
active’. This has resulted in growing expectations for academics to apply for more grants,
thereby leading to increased volumes of grant applications, resulting in spill-over on workloads
of research services staff. In turn, this has led to a noticeable shift in emphases to outcomes and
related expectations, and increasing assessment of research at all levels and stages. The RTS
was also seen to have had a significant impact on how supervisors undertook research student
supervision. The following quotation captures these two areas of changing researcher
behaviour.
… the RQF has been an interesting exercise with people doing a trial run and quite a few people who started to do that and then sort of changed their mind and thought “Aww it’s a bit confronting” and withdrew from it and then a good exercise for those who did it and then thinking about… academics thinking about positioning themselves and what does it mean if we are going towards a sort of thing of having people who just do teaching and whether they want to be part of that and if they do not, how do they maneuver themselves not to be. And ...(there) has really been an enormous culture change in removing the idea or the old fashioned thing of … the lone wolf supervisor with the sole student and opening that up and not just making people more accountable but giving them a lot more resources and giving their students a lot more independence in directing their learning. But assisting supervisors too and they have got a shorter time frame and they have got people looking at them… (1210).

**Technological Advances and Increased Online Processing**

A number of interviewees in discussing major workplace changes, pointed to the evolution of information technology and the increasing demand for intelligent, responsive, comprehensive data collection and reporting systems. This demand has been exacerbated by increased work volume – particularly the increased number of applications, and growing complexity of grant schemes. Also of note is the proliferation of research management systems across the sector, required to deliver on increasingly sophisticated information requirements (of which the advent of the RQF was a significant driver as discussed in Chapter 8).

The move to sophisticated data management systems in research service offices was not without its challenges, as fittingly expressed in the following quotation:

The major changes are… the sort of changes that you would expect a person who is going from a horse and buggy to being told you have to drive a Rolls Royce now… Huge changes are expected of people…to jump from antiquated techniques … to current technology… in research services perhaps the sum total of the data was held by seven or eight different people around the office who would have had excel spreadsheets and they would have had all of their data in 30 excel spreadsheets, in half a dozen FoxPro files with no common numbering systems; different start numbers; different project numbers; different numbering systems for the schemes; different concepts of whether is the scheme a sponsor or are they two different things; to where if you were to ask a person: “Can you give me a report on our income for those particular years?”; it might take that person a couple of weeks to do it… to where what they are wanting is a centralised database with
everyone using a web application, applying for grants online, assessing those grants on line and submitting them electronically to grantors. So …that in a nutshell is the horse and buggy to Rolls Royce…and then you have got, people being told to change when you are actually asking people to give up what made them famous in an office in that they had the power, they had all of this data in their excel spreadsheets… (1101).

Increased forms of electronic monitoring on a range of indices and activities, related in part to compliance and accountability pressures and requirements, were also examples put forward by interviewees of the changing nature of research services work as it related to technology. There has also been an increased expectation for the availability and use of online delivery of services (by students and staff). This includes provision of information and forms, and the change by granting bodies to online application processes. The push for streamlining of administrative activities, reporting, and ‘busy manual work’, also feature in a number of the responses later in this chapter in relation to the heightened focus of the study’s participants on efficiency, time management and managing workloads. For example:

…the move that people are pushing to get everything online, whether it be websites or the application forms or things like that… (1205).

The findings presented in this section on the degree of change in participants’ workplaces, along with details of change drivers and their associated impacts provided by the interviewees, supports earlier findings as reported in study’s literature review of the changing nature of: RMA work; research activity; and researcher behaviour. At the time of study, the RQF was arguably a fulcrum point at which each of the six participant-identified drivers of change played or would play a role. The actual and anticipated impacts of the RQF at the time of study are explored in detail in Chapter 8.

**RMA WORK FUNCTIONS**

**Role Descriptions**

Questionnaire participants were asked to briefly describe their role (Q31). Their responses were entered into QSR.NVivo 8 and then analysed for common categories. Response categories were difficult to establish initially when the data was treated as coming from one homogenous participant group. This material only took shape once the raw data was sorted (that is, stratified) by participant characteristics (collected as demographic background in the questionnaire); namely, salary level and staffing subgroup.
Where possible, broad ‘Statements of Responsibility’ were developed from the stratified information using the most commonly indicated role descriptions within each staffing subgroup. This was possible for six of the eight identified staffing subgroups. In turn, each of these six statements were broken down into smaller sub-elements or staffing subsets ordered by salary level and organisational reporting lines. These statements are very information intensive and disruptive to the flow of this chapter, and so are contained in Appendix I.

The appended responsibility statements represented either amalgams of the participants’ role descriptions or individual participant’s own phraseology (the latter occurring in instances where an individual response captured common sentiment across that staffing subset). Where role divergences within a staffing subset occurred, the differences have been presented as a possible role variation. However, in instances where role descriptions appeared to be highly individualised (for example, when a response included a responsibility function not shared across the staffing subset and which appeared to be highly contextualised to that particular situation), then the information was either denuded of identifying material and offered as a possible role variation, or it was not included and a supporting note to that effect provided.

Together these statements provide a framework that captures the detail of RMA work roles as nominated by participants. Given the need to ensure anonymity of individual participants, unique and potentially identifying details of functional responsibilities have been omitted; this being particularly evident in areas where staffing subgroups have small numbers. Small participant numbers also hampered the construction of broad ‘Statements of Responsibility’ for the remaining two staffing subgroups, namely; ‘RMA (General/Operational/ Planning)’ and ‘RMA (Policy/Quality/RQF/Projects)’. The six statements and corresponding sub-elements, together with supporting notes, are provided in Appendix I and comprise the staffing subgroups:

- Deputy Director/Director
- RMA (Grants/Finance) (Subsets A – D)
- RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students) (Subsets E – H)
- RMA (Ethics) (Subsets I – L)
- RMA (Data/IT Systems) (Subsets M – P)
- RMA (Contracts/Consulting/External Relations/Research Development)

Carter and Langley (2009, p. 32) identified ten fundamental components of the management and administration of research. The author draws on this model to group and display the
findings described above – producing a fairly succinct overview that also alerts the reader to the scope of the role descriptions that are presented in full in Appendix I.

Table 6.4 Overview of Fundamental Components of RMA Work by Staffing Subgroup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10 FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENTS OF MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF RESEARCH (Carter &amp; Langley, 2009, p. 32)</th>
<th>RESPONSIBLE RMA STAFFING SUBGROUP (Cross-referenced to most applicable Broad Statement of Responsibility as indicated)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. ‘The development of opportunities…’ | -RMA (Contracts/Consulting/External Relations/Research Development)  
See Table App I.6 |
| 2. ‘The support of the funding application and award processes…’ | -RMA (Grants/Finance)  
-RMA (Contracts/Consulting/External Relations/Research Development)  
See Tables App I.2 and I.6 |
| 3. ‘The support of operational projects…’ | -RMA (Grants/Finance)  
-RMA (Contracts/Consulting/External Relations/Research Development)  
-RMA (Policy/Quality/RQF/Projects)  
See Tables App I.2 and I.6 |
| 4. ‘The production, management, use and promotion of the outputs of research…’ | -Deputy Director/Director  
-RMA (Data/IT Systems)  
See Tables App I.1 and I.5 |
| 5. ‘Postgraduate research [administration and development]…’ | -Deputy Director/Director (as indicated in the opening chapter responsibility for this area may come under a separate graduate office or similar under the auspice of a Dean of Graduate Studies)  
- RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)  
See Tables App I.1 and I.3 |
| 6. ‘The capture, analysis and reporting of activity, customers and competitors…’ | -Deputy Director/Director  
-RMA (Data/IT Systems)  
-RMA (Contracts/Consulting/External Relations/Research Development)  
See Tables App I.1, I.5 and I.6 |
| 7. ‘Research governance…’ | -Deputy Director/Director  
-RMA (Ethics)  
See Tables App I.1 and I.4 |
| 8. ‘The monitoring and assessment of research and related activities…’ | -Deputy Director/Director  
-RMA (Grants/Finance)  
-RMA (Data/IT Systems)  
-RMA (Ethics)  
-RMA (Policy/Quality/RQF/Projects)  
See Tables App I.1, I.2, I.4 and I.5 |
| 9. ‘Research strategy, policy and planning…’ | All eight staffing subgroups to varying degree.  
See Tables App I.1 to App I.6 |
| 10. ‘The development and maintenance of appropriate corporate systems and administrative mechanisms for the support and automation of processes, and the capture and provision of information…’ | -Deputy Director/Director  
-RMA (Data/IT Systems)  
See Tables App I.1 and I.5 |
The Carter and Langley (2009) components are listed in the first column of Table 6.4 adjacent to the most applicable staffing subgroup, which is further cross-referenced (see identified Table in Appendix I) to the most applicable ‘Statement of Responsibility’ developed within this study. So, for example, the component: ‘1. The development of opportunities… ’, is most likely to be applicable to the composite staffing subgroup identified in this research as ‘RMA (Contracts/Consulting/External Relations/Research Development)’.

It needs to be noted that centralised RMA staff may be wholly or partially involved with the management and administration of research, in conjunction with academic researchers and other professional staff based in faculties and/or other areas of university administration.

Regarding the eighth core element listed in Table 6.4, Carter and Langley (2009) were specifically referring in this instance to the monitoring and assessment of research performance in relation to the RAE (now REF) assessments. Its Australian equivalent, Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA), did not have its first assessment exercise until 2010. Consequently, it was outside this study’s time parameters, with no reference to it having been made in participants’ role descriptions. However, what is captured by this study were participant reactions to the pre and post implementation phases of the ERA’s antecedent, the RQF, as discussed in detail in Chapter 8. From this material it was found that participants from the three staffing subgroups of: ‘Deputy Director/Director’; ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’; and to a lesser extent, ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’, were the most involved in preparing material for the upcoming RQF round – therefore, these three staffing subgroups have been listed in relation to this core element in Table 6.4. Newly appointed RMA staff ‘RMA (Policy/Quality/RQF/Projects)’, were also directly involved in university preparations for the new research assessment framework.

This overview, together with the broad ‘Statements of Responsibility’ (Appendix I), provide a starting point or foundation from which to develop an RMA body of knowledge, and a formalised codification of the work functions specific to centralised research support areas of Australian universities. This material could also be used as an initial reference point for informing targeted professional development and training programs directed to the various staffing subgroups, and in the benchmarking of RMA roles and responsibilities in the workplace.
Role Complexity

During the construction of the broad ‘Statements of Responsibility’, it became apparent that the level of role complexity of a particular facet of responsibility (for example, grant application processing (see Table 6.5)) intensified with higher participant salary levels. Whilst the correlation between role complexity and participant salary would undoubtedly be the predictable product of effective job design and commensurate remuneration levels; it is, nevertheless, instructive of the differing levels of functioning that occur within a research services unit. Illustrative examples of this effect in relation to: ‘grant application processing’; ‘responsibilities for funding opportunities’; ‘HDR student administration’; ‘ethics’; and ‘treatment of research data’, are provided in Tables 6.5 to 6.9. Each of these tables detail one dimension or facet of responsibility identified in a statement (second column) involving a single staffing subgroup viewed at four participant salary levels, with corresponding levels of role complexity (‘Low’, ‘Medium’, and ‘High’). The responsibility facets referred to in each of the five tables are drawn directly from the descriptive material contained within the study’s broad ‘Statements of Responsibility’ in Appendix I.

Table 6.5 RMA (Grants/Finance): Responsibilities Regarding Grant Application Processing by Level of Role Complexity and Participant Salary Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY FACET</th>
<th>ROLE COMPLEXITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEW 10/10+</td>
<td>Not applicable/available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| HEW 8-9      | Provision of independent lay review of application/proposal documentation including compliance matters.  
(Table App I.2, Staffing Subset C) | HIGH            |
| HEW 6-7      | Ensure all grant applications are compliant to the funding body and to university policy. 
(Table App I.2, Staffing Subset B) | MEDIUM          |
| HEW 4-5      | Receive and process research grant applications to be forwarded to external bodies. 
(Table App I.2, Staffing Subset A) | LOW             |

Table 6.6 RMA (Grants/Finance): Responsibilities Regarding Funding Opportunities by Level of Role Complexity and Participant Salary Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY FACET</th>
<th>ROLE COMPLEXITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEW 10/10+</td>
<td>Not applicable/available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| HEW 8-9      | Responsible for the identification and promotion of research funding opportunities and for the subsequent support and development of associated research grant applications. 
(Table App I.2, Staffing Subset C) | HIGH            |
| HEW 6-7      | Disseminate information and advice to researchers on sources of research (internal and external) funding support. 
(Table App I.2, Staffing Subset B) | MEDIUM          |
| HEW 4-5      | Advertise funding opportunities. 
(Table App I.2, Staffing Subset A) | LOW             |
**Table 6.7** RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students): Responsibilities Regarding HDR Administration by Level of Role Complexity and Participant Salary Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY FACET</th>
<th>ROLE COMPLEXITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEW 10/10+</td>
<td>Management of a Graduate Research Centre or School.</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Table App I.3, Staffing Subset H)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 8-9</td>
<td>Responsibility for developing and implementing appropriate policies and procedures</td>
<td>MEDIUM/ HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and acting as the university’s resource person and advisor on HDR matters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Table App I.3, Staffing Subset G)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 6-7</td>
<td>Responsibility for HDR candidature management and administration (for example:</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>manage orientation activities).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Table App I.3, Staffing Subset F)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 4-5</td>
<td>Responsibility for ongoing administration of postgraduate students (for example:</td>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>administering examination of theses).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Table App I.3, Staffing Subset E)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.8** RMA (Ethics): Responsibilities Regarding Ethics Administration by Role Complexity and Salary Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY FACET</th>
<th>ROLE COMPLEXITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEW 10/10+</td>
<td>Responsibility to direct an Ethics office or Research Integrity Office which is</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>charged with the Administration of all ethics committees of a university and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>associated activities <em>(Table App I.4, Staffing Subset L)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 8-9</td>
<td>Note: similar to HEW 6-7 – no defining feature apparent in this participant group.</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Table App I.4, Staffing Subset K)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 6-7</td>
<td>Undertake the role of Ethics Officer/Executive Offer to (one or more) ethics</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>committees with responsibility for all aspects of (human/animal/biosafety) ethics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>administration. <em>(Table App I.4, Staffing Subset J)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 4-5</td>
<td>Support the Ethics Officer/Executive Officer by undertaking day-to-day administrative</td>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tasks. <em>(Table App I.4, Staffing Subset I)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.9** RMA (Data/IT Systems): Responsibilities Regarding the Treatment of Research Data by Role Complexity and Salary Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF SALARY</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY FACET</th>
<th>ROLE COMPLEXITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEW 10/10+</td>
<td>Manage a team responsible for the collecting, validating, storing and analysing</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>research management information. <em>(Table App I.5, Staffing Subset P)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 8-9</td>
<td>Responsibility for the promotion, demonstration, support, upgrade and enhancement/</td>
<td>MEDIUM/ HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s of IT applications involved with university research activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Table App I.5, Staffing Subset O)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 6-7</td>
<td>Responsible for compiling reports on university research activities (for example:</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ABS reports; HERDC reports; and annual research reports). *(Table App I.5, Staffing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subset N)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW 4-5</td>
<td>Undertake data collection/entry/analysis of university research activities.</td>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Table App I.5, Staffing Subset M)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So, for example, the responsibility for managing a team of RMA staff ‘responsible for the collecting, validating, storing and analysing research management information’ (as drawn from the broad ‘Statement of Responsibility’ in Table App I.5, Subset P) would be an undertaking of ‘High’ complexity, that would be carried out by the most senior ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ at the HEW 10/10+ salary range (see Table 6.9). On the other hand, the most junior of the same staffing subgroup at the HEW 4-5 salary range would be responsible for undertaking tasks of ‘Low’ complexity, such as the ‘data collection/entry/analysis of university research activities (as drawn from the broad ‘Statement of Responsibility’ in Table App I.5, Subset M) (see Table 6.9). The issue of increased role complexity as a function of salary level will be returned to in the next chapter.

Moving on from participant responsibility statements, the next section presents the findings on workplace performance and accountabilities.

**WORK PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITIES**

In this section, the findings are presented for four questionnaire items which were designed to elicit information about performance and accountability expectations of the participant group; from their own perspectives. The questions were:

Q44) ‘In your current role, what do you think you are held most accountable for?’
Q45) ‘What do you most strive to achieve in terms of performance in your role and why?’
Q46 - Q47) ‘What aspect of your role is the most/least difficult to achieve and why?’

The responses (n = 194) were entered into QSR.NVivo 8 and analysed for common categories across and within all four items. Once the response categories were established, the data was coded to these categories and initially analysed by frequency. The resultant response categories presented in Table 6.10 are listed under the three overarching themes: ‘Communication’; ‘Performance Measures’; and ‘Stakeholder Relations’, each comprising a number of categories that emerged from the analysis, along with counts of occurrence of mention. The response categories listed in the table are ordered from highest to lowest occurrence of mention. The coding notes used in the process are given in Appendix J.

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19 The analysis of this data elicited a further theme ‘Role Functions’ (see Appendix J), which were typically expressed as role statements, for example, ‘I am accountable for managing staff’. This type of information is already captured in the ‘Statements of Responsibility’ outlined above, so is not repeated here, but is drawn on later in the findings reported under the subheading: ‘Performance and Accountability Expectations by Staffing Subgroup’.
Table 6.10 Emerging Response Categories Regarding Participant Work Performance and Accountabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Performance and Accountability Expectations: Emerging Response Categories</th>
<th>Occurrence of Mention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Providing Advice (Including Feedback)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Communication (Including Negotiation)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Information Dissemination</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance Measures</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Efficiency (Including Time Management (Management) and Deadlines)</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Service</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Performance Expectations and Outcomes</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Accuracy</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Compliance</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Workload</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Work Quality (Including Performance Reviews)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Effectiveness</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Contribution and Value-Adding</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Professionalism (Including Reputation and Accountability)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Job Satisfaction (Achievement)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Brand Protection and Enhancement</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stakeholder Relations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Workplace Relationships</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Organisational Culture</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interconnectivity</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Recognition (Including Respect)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Team Work</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- External Relations</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- University Executive (Senior Management)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Political Landscape</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that very large numbers of participants made mention of ‘efficiency’ in one form or another; relating this to performance and accountability connected with time management and deadlines, and also ‘workplace relationships’ and ‘service’. The categories will be elaborated on in the next section, collected under the themes, and presented in order of frequency (total count) of mention.
Communication

Communication as a theme encompasses communication in general, giving advice and dissemination of information.

Providing Advice (n = 59)

Fourteen participants indicated they were most accountable for providing advice that was helpful, informed, timely, accurate, and according to some, specialised and/or targeted to ensure successful outcomes or ‘correct’ decision making. Regarding performance, 22 participants indicated that they aimed to provide high quality advice in a timely manner. Some of these responses were couched in terms of the importance of building strong, positive rapport/relationships with academics so that any advice given was respected and valued. Therefore, the goal was ensuring academics either sought advice early (thus reducing potential problems or conflicts) and/or responded to advice or followed instructions productively.

Of the 14 participants indicating that providing advice was the least difficult aspect of their role, almost half of these saw providing advice as part of a process which they found easy to do. A smaller group of participants indicated they had built a deep familiarity with their area of expertise, and found providing advice an easy aspect of their role as they could be effective in that activity. The remaining participants indicated they felt their advice was valued and appreciated by academic researchers, making this an ‘easy’ facet of their work roles.

By contrast, nine participants indicated that providing advice could be the most difficult aspect of their role to achieve. The three main reasons given for this choice were: the lack of time in which to give timely, detailed feedback; the difficulty in providing accurate advice across a broad spectrum of topics; and, situations where the advice given was undervalued. When advice was undervalued, it was either ignored or unwelcome, which participants believed hampered the effectiveness of their input.

Communication (n = 41)

Five participants indicated that effective communication was an aspect of their role for which they were most accountable, and nine participants indicated that effective communication was the most difficult aspect of their role to achieve. The difficulty of communicating: ‘unwelcome’ information; upwards through senior management; or more broadly across institutions, featured in these responses. In terms of performance expectations, 16 participants indicated they focused on achieving effective, productive and accurate communication. Comments included the need
to provide clarity regarding administrative requirements (for example: grant application processes), or openness and transparency about actions being taken.

Of the 11 participants who indicated communicating was the least difficult aspect of their role, over half indicated they enjoyed interacting and communicating with others, while the remainder found performing forms of electronic communication (answering emails or writing routine correspondence) the easiest activities to perform.

Information Dissemination \((n = 23)\)

The seven participants who indicated accountability for information dissemination highlighted a wide spectrum of material which they were responsible for distributing. This material involved, for example, disseminating information regarding: committee decisions; research policy changes; grant application processes; or statistical information on research student candidature.

Seven participants indicated they aimed to achieve fast turn-around of information or deliver reports that were accurate and timely. Several participants indicated that they had difficulty in ensuring the information they disseminated reached its target audience effectively. Six participants in this response category indicated information dissemination was an easy feature of their role to undertake because it either involved routine work, and/or they enjoyed the communicative nature of this activity.

Performance Measures

The second major strand of responses relate to ‘Performance Measures’, which consisted of twelve response categories starting with the much-mentioned area of ‘Efficiency’.

Efficiency (Time Management and Deadlines) \((n = 151)\)

Of the 39 participants who indicated they were accountable for efficiency in their work, half focused on efficient administration of processes such as ethics approvals and contract administration. The remaining participants were focused in three main areas: meeting grants submission and/or contractual obligation (such as reporting milestones) deadlines; providing efficient services across the broad spectrum of research office work; or providing timely responses to queries.

Sixty-nine participants reported they focused on achieving efficiency in their workplace, with most specifying the aim of providing efficient service/advice or assistance to researchers and students. The remaining participants were focused on streamlining procedures and processes or achieving grant application submission or compliance obligations within set timeframes. The
key theme behind the focus on efficiency appeared to be the recognition that participants undertook a facilitative role and, therefore, the more efficiently they performed their role the more productive researchers and research students could be. The greater the turn-around of advice/service/process facilitated or provided by the participant, the less frustration with ‘bureaucracy’ experienced or expressed by stakeholders; hence translating into increased client satisfaction.

Of the 33 participants who indicated difficulty in achieving work efficiency, half reported high workloads and at times unworkable deadlines as having an impact on their desired efficiency levels. The remaining participants pointed to the difficulties of meeting external deadlines (for example: grant submission dates, contractual or compliance obligations, or reporting timelines), predominantly because academic researchers either did not supply the required information in a timely manner or did not meet internal deadlines, resulting in flow-on effects to participant work efficiency. Conversely, ten participants indicated achieving efficiency was the least difficult aspect of their work, mostly as a result of polished and/or effective support systems or processes.

Service ($n = 100$)
Thirteen participants reported they were most accountable for providing supportive services which addressed customer/client expectations or resulted in client/customer satisfaction. Similarly, 63 participants indicated that they worked hardest to provide good to high quality service to researchers and students. Motivation for providing good customer service ranged from: an understanding that the research office was a support unit or that RMA provided support functions; to the expressed aim of participants to increase research success or productivity and/or enhance workplace relations.

Five participants indicated ‘service’ was an aspect of their role they found most difficult to achieve at a desired level, mainly because of workload constraints. For the 19 participants who indicated providing service was the least difficult aspect of their role, most of them indicated they gained a lot of personal satisfaction from helping or supporting others and being of assistance.

Performance Expectations and Outcomes ($n = 88$)
Twenty-one participants referred to their accountability for achieving or facilitating performance expectations or outcomes. More than half of these participants expressed accountability for: the level of institutional grant success; research income growth or other
research targets; and, student completion rates. The remainder expressed accountability for meeting the service expectations of researchers at an individual/unit or research office level.

Forty-one participants reported they focused on meeting institutional or individual performance expectations. Almost half of these participants focused on their own high work performance, with the remainder focused on contributing to improved research outcomes of various forms. Targeted outcomes included improved researcher participation rates, improved animal welfare practices or the meeting of research performance targets.

Just under half of the 22 participants who indicated difficulty in achieving some form of performance expectation or desired outcome, reported problems with achieving increasing institutional research performance expectations whilst not receiving concomitant increases in RMA staffing and related resources. Six of the 22 participants highlighted difficulties with getting academic staff to engage with: either university research targets per se or directly with research development officers (with a view to building contractual relationships with external stakeholders); compliance/regulatory issues; or the research office itself. This perceived lack of engagement could have an impact on research performance levels, according to participants.

The remaining responses were mostly either about the difficulties involved with sourcing possible funding opportunities or meeting user expectations with regard to the development of research management information systems. In turn, four participants indicated activities such as assisting student completions, achieving smooth committee administration, or motivating staff, as the least difficult areas in which to meet their current performance expectations.

Accuracy ($n = 82$)

For accountability, 39 participants indicated they were accountable for accuracy in their work via three main areas. Firstly, they were accountable for accuracy in all forms of administrative processing (for example: correct stipend amounts). Secondly, they were accountable for ensuring the accuracy of advice, information or data they provided to others. Thirdly, accuracy was required to ensure that grant applications adhered to funding guidelines or to ensure reports and related information met funding body requirements.

Accuracy was very much a performance measure which 39 participants indicated they focused on in their work to increase successful grant application outcomes, enhance workplace relations or improve workplace efficiency. Of the eight participants who indicated ensuring accuracy was a difficult part of their job, either workload or problems with information systems hampered achievement in this area, and/or participants relied on input from researchers which
may not be correct or complete. The remaining three participants under this category indicated
accuracy was the least difficult aspect of their work because either the work they were
performing was completely within their control, or they had built up a level of expertise in a
particular area of responsibility in which accuracy was required.

Compliance \((n = 81)\)
Of the 33 participants who indicated they were held accountable for compliance, the majority
fell into two streams of responsibilities. The first is where participants have responsibility (at
various levels) for ensuring university research is compliant with ethics and safety legislation
and relevant state and federal codes of practice and guidelines. The second is responsibility for
ensuring granting applications are compliant with funding body guidelines and/or that post-
award funding body requirements are complied with and/or contractual obligations are
discharged. This dichotomy (ethics legislation compliance compared with funding body
compliance), is similarly evident in the comments made by the 15 participants who indicated
compliance was an aspect of their work which they most endeavored to achieve.

Most of the 29 participants who indicated compliance was something they found most difficult
to achieve in their work, commented on the difficulties involved with fostering or encouraging
compliant behaviour by researchers and student researchers, or changing current researcher
behaviours to become more compliant. Academic workload was seen as a factor here, as was
the lack of recognition by some researchers of the need for compliance with relevant
legislation/guidelines and related policies. Four participants indicated compliance was one of
the least difficult aspect of their work mainly because they worked with ‘compliant friendly’
departments or individuals.

Workload \((n = 72)\)
One participant mentioned they were accountable for their workload, while seven others said
they were striving most to manage their workload, particularly given resource constraints and
seasonal workflow impacts. Sixty-three participants indicated that managing their workload
was a facet of their role they found most difficult to achieve, and/or workload prevented them
from achieving other aims or performance expectations. Having too much work to do was the
primary reason given by participants for being unable to achieve goals, with lack of resources or
resource constraints also featuring.

Workload levels were given as the reason why some participants were unable to at times:
provide more detailed advice on grant applications; undertake strategic planning and innovative
measures; meet all deadlines; keep abreast of issues across their portfolios; proactively seek
funding opportunities; provide the desired level of service or advice; or participate in necessary training or skills upgrading. Academic workload was also cited by some as having an impact on researchers complying with internal deadlines, which then impacted the workload of participants. One participant nominated that having sufficient work to do was in fact the least difficult aspect of their role.

**Work Quality \( (n = 59) \)**

Eight participants indicated they were accountable for the quality of their work and/or the work quality and performance of their staff, or for the review and improvement/enhancement of some policy/procedural aspect of research management. Of the 39 participants who indicated they were most attentive on achieving work quality in the performance of their role, half were focused on providing high quality service and/or advice, whilst a quarter of these participants indicated they strived to achieve the best work performance they could within resource and workload constraints. Six of the 39 participants aimed for excellence or indeed ‘perfection’ in their role performance, whilst the remaining five focused on proactivity and/or innovation to improve processes/procedures/systems.

Eleven participants indicated that work quality was an aspect of their role which they found most difficult to achieve because of: resource or workload constraints; or faults in underlying systems/processes; or change resistance in stakeholders to innovation or cultural shifts (such as adherence to compliance regimes). Conversely, one participant indicated work quality was easy for them to achieve in the area of pre-award development and management of grants because they loved that part of their role.

**Effectiveness \( (n = 58) \)**

Fifteen participants indicated they were most accountable for the effective management or administration of various processes and activities, including the effective functioning of relevant committees and effective interactions between the research office and other stakeholders. Thirty participants indicated they aimed to achieve effectiveness in their work role predominantly in order to be productive and/or to best support researchers and students. For some, being effective also meant achieving the balance between supporting growth in research activity with the need to meet compliance and related obligations, while for several others being effective was essential for achieving high performance levels.

Eleven participants indicated it was difficult to be effective in aspects of their role because of: inadequate research-related IT systems; researchers being uncooperative in terms of providing
data/information; or lack of understanding or recognition of participant role and inputs. For two participants, being effective was the least difficult part of the role because they had either built up the necessary expertise or their research-related IT system effectively addressed information needs of end users.

**Contribution and Value-Adding (n = 38)**

Thirteen participants reported they tried most to contribute or value-add in their workplace through providing timely and strategic advice and support, and/or providing a high quality level of service designed to facilitate research work by steering/guiding the researcher through various obligatory processes. Two participants indicated they were accountable for ensuring they contributed value to grant applications or through providing enhanced research-related IT solutions.

Twelve participants indicated that they found contributing or value-adding to a process or activity the most difficult aspect of their work to achieve, predominantly because researchers did not value or were dismissive of RMA contribution or contribution potential. For the 11 participants who found contributing or value-adding a least difficult aspect of their work, half indicated academics acknowledged the value of their input. The remaining participants gave examples of how their work facilitated research or added value to related processes such as providing tailor-made reports drawn from IT systems or analysing potential funding collaborations/opportunities for researchers.

**Professionalism (Reputation and Accountability) (n = 33)**

Two participants reported accountability for providing professional services to others through their work. In turn, 21 participants indicated they were focused on professionalism, with 10 of these participants reporting that they provided a professional service or acted professionally. Of the remaining participants, six worked to enhance or build their work reputation, whilst five held themselves to a particular work standard either as a reflection of institutional reputation or ‘dignity’, or because they personally felt accountability or responsibility. Four participants indicated difficulty achieving desired professionalism in aspects of their work of an individual nature, with workload levels being a featured reason. Six participants identified that primarily because they worked with highly competent, motivated staff, professionalism was the least difficult thing to achieve in their job.
Job Satisfaction (Achievement) \((n = 32)\)

Eighteen participants reported their personal job satisfaction was derived from achieving high performance levels that they aimed for, or for providing high levels of customer service as evidenced by ‘happy customers’. Those participants who managed staff also indicated ‘happy, motivated staff’ as something they felt accountable for fostering; noting the relationship between well-informed, motivated staff and high levels of customer service and performance achievement. Of the 12 participants who indicated job satisfaction was the least difficult facet of their work to achieve, a majority indicated they enjoyed most, if not all, aspects of their position – particularly customer/client service. The remaining two participants indicated it was hard to get a sense of job satisfaction either because of workload levels, or because aspects of their work were ‘tedious and unrewarding’.

Brand Protection and Enhancement \((n = 18)\)

Five participants indicated accountability for forms of ‘brand protection and enhancement’ of their institution. The responses were focused either on ensuring that institutional reputation did not suffer through of acts of legislative non-compliance (such as research misconduct) or that institutional reputation was enhanced through research successes. Three participants indicated they strived to achieve high standards of performance in their role (or the performance of staff they were responsible for) because of perceived effects on institutional reputations. A further six participants were focused on ensuring ethical compliance, thereby minimizing risk exposure of their university (including addressing general public expectation of appropriate animal welfare practices for instance); or they indicated a focus on helping to achieve forms of brand enhancement (such as high student satisfaction rates translating into good word-of-mouth advertising).

A further three participants indicated that forms of ‘brand protection and enhancement’ were the most difficult to achieve in their role. One of the examples given in the responses indicated that research misconduct could occur despite best intentions of all concerned, with flow-on effects to individual and institutional reputations. Only one participant indicated assisting students to completion was the least difficult aspect of their work, noting the flow-on benefits of student completion at the unit, faculty and institutional level.
Stakeholder Relations

The third and final major strand of questionnaire responses as indicated in Table 6.10 was ‘Stakeholder Relations’, which consisted of eight response categories as reported in the following.

Workplace Relations \((n = 129)\)

Eight participants indicated they were accountable for building and/or maintaining relationships between the research office, academics, and other areas of the university. Thirty-four participants indicated workplace relations as a facet of their work that they focused on the most. Almost all of these responses were about developing and maintaining good working relationships through providing a good/high level of facilitation/service to researchers. The reasons given for the focus on relationship management included: so that researchers felt well-supported and more trusting towards research support staff; to build compliant behaviours and to increase the value/recognition given to RMA input into the research process; to increase morale in the workplace; and, to increase productivity.

Sixty-three participants indicated workplace relations as a most difficult aspect of their role, with around one-third highlighting the difficulty in being seen to be value-adding and supportive when they have to ensure compliance and related obligations are met, resulting in researchers’ perceptions of paper wars and bureaucracy. Similarly, it was harder for participants to value-add and be supportive when working with researchers who were not compliant. An example of this was where researchers did not meet internal deadlines, thereby giving participants less time to contribute or value-add to grant applications.

Seventeen of the 63 participants indicated the workload pressures of either academics and/or participants themselves, had an impact on workplace relations through missed deadlines or workloads/responsibilities shifting between groups. Fifteen of the 63 participants indicated their work was not valued by researchers and other stakeholders, thereby adversely affecting workplace relations. For the remainder it was about adjusting to differing agendas and priorities across the institution when trying to support research activities, and/or trying to develop or maintain interest and expertise across a broad spectrum of research disciplines.

Twenty-four participants indicated successful workplace relations as the least difficult aspect of their role to achieve, predominantly because they enjoyed: building rapport or communicating with others; being of service/assistance; and/or, they enjoyed the collegiality of the workplace. A positive working relationship with researchers in particular was a feature of these responses.
Organisational Culture \((n = 50)\)

Four participants indicated they were accountable for a culture of compliance at some level of operation, with one other participant reporting they focused most on promoting the importance of animal welfare regardless of legislative requirements. Another four participants reported that they tried to add value or be of service to researchers, signifying that they did so in order to prove their value or ‘justify my role’, hinting perhaps at the underlying organisational culture.

Thirty participants implicated organisational culture as a contributing factor to aspects of their role which they found most difficult to achieve. Most of these responses pointed to researcher resistance to compliance mechanisms, either through failing to meet set deadlines or not providing complete information, or in some instances ‘working around’ the relevant research office. Researcher resistance to incorporating ethical and safety requirements into their research was also raised. Equally, 11 participants indicated their work was greatly assisted by being part of a collegial workplace and/or one which had a strong culture of compliance and/or where researchers were appreciative of participant input and effort.

Interconnectivity \((n = 43)\)

Accountabilities indicated by four participants highlighted the interconnectivity of their work with the work of others. Examples given include: where participants were responsible for checking academic grant applications ensuring they met eligibility criteria before sending them to funding bodies; to being responsible for the accuracy of database information whilst being reliant on system users to input the information correctly. Ten participants indicated they tried to provide good support/service or build cooperative relationships to enable others to achieve/be productive or otherwise engage with the support provided.

For 19 participants the interconnectivity of their work to others meant they found it difficult to achieve some aspect of their role or responsibility because, for example, academic researchers failed to meet internal deadlines which, in turn, affected participants’ abilities to achieve set timeframes. The interconnectivity of research information systems with other transactional systems (for example: finance systems) was also highlighted as an area of difficulty, where there were: compatibility problems; data delinquency; or instances where the current research information system was inadequate for reporting or data mining by participants and other users. In turn, six participants indicated that a least difficult aspect of their role to achieve was establishing and/or maintaining cooperative working relationships, or attaining an outcome in instances where they were not relying on input from others.
Recognition (Including Respect) \((n = 36)\)

Two participants reported they were accountable for some stream of administrative processing. Both participants in their own way highlighted the issue of a lack of recognition or respect for their role in these processes, as shown in the following quotations:

Sometimes I think I am nothing more than a bloody mailbox! \((31048)\).

Being the person that must be wrong! \((32301)\).

Seven participants indicated they strived to achieve respect or recognition for their role/input/value-adding efforts by providing high quality facilitative services to researchers, students and supervisors. Other participants \((n = 18)\) indicated that they found gaining respect or recognition for their role/input/value-adding was one of the most difficult aspects of their work. In turn, nine participants indicated that an aspect of their role that was least difficult to achieve was either: researchers valuing participant input on a range of matters, including grant applications and contract writing; or others (for example: academics or university management) recognising the importance of the RMA role in general.

Team Work \((n = 24)\)

Four participants indicated accountability for team management, while seven participants indicated team building as something they aimed to achieve in their role, noting the importance of effective team functioning in delivering desired service levels and/or inducing good staff morale in particular. Four participants indicated that functions of team management were the most difficult aspects of their role to achieve. Examples given include: when working with uncooperative team members; or when working across areas that are not working in harmony with each other. In turn, nine participants indicated that being part of a good team made their roles easier, and/or managing a team of people (or delivering output through the auspices of a team) was made easier through the cooperative and dedicated efforts of all involved.

External Relations \((n = 21)\)

Three participants indicated accountability for either maintaining and/or building external relationships, including sourcing funding opportunities. Thirteen participants indicated they focused on achieving in the area of external relations either through ensuring researcher compliance with external funding body guidelines, and/or through building relationships with external stakeholders.
Two participants gave examples in which they had difficulties with external stakeholders. The first one observed workload shifts from funding bodies and other stakeholders to the participant’s area of responsibility, while the other had difficulties in obtaining thesis reports from examiners on time. On the other hand, three participants indicated one of the least difficult aspects of their role was building relationships with external stakeholders.

*University Executive (Senior Management) (n = 18)*

Three participants indicated that they aimed to support senior management in differing ways, including via the delivery of timely and accurate information. Ten participants indicated they found supporting senior management as one of the most difficult aspects of their role to achieve, albeit for different reasons. For some the difficulty was experienced when trying to communicate with or work upwards through senior management. For others the difficulties were trying to deliver on unrealistic expectations of senior management – particularly when working with limited resources. For the remainder of participants the difficulty was in getting senior management to value the RMA role or to recognise the workload involve, particularly, for example, the effort required to produce reports.

In turn, five participants indicated a number of reasons as to why working with senior management was an aspect of their role they found least difficult to achieve. The reasons included; providing advice to senior management was easy given the availability of good data systems and/or staffing expertise. Others indicated they were able to deliver on their various responsibilities because they were well supported by senior management, in particular those who acknowledged the value of RMA work.

*Political Landscape (n = 15)*

When describing matters they were held accountable for, three participants touched on issues which pointed to the political landscape in which they operated. For instance, one participant indicated that they (or their office) were held responsible for their institution’s success (or otherwise) in major grant rounds; where another indicated their office was responsible for conducting administration efficiently, whilst not being a ‘financial drain’ on their university. The third participant indicated that they were held accountable if they ‘upset’ particular researchers that were not compliant with various legislations. Similar issues were raised by a further two participants when addressing the question as to what they most strived to achieve.
Of the ten participants who put forward matters they found most difficult to achieve in the performance of their role, four pointed to the difficulties of delivering on tactical responsibilities or institutional political decisions whilst carrying out their day-to-day activities. Three participants highlighted the difficulties of achieving the balancing act between facilitating research and addressing compliance and related obligations, whilst operating within an ‘increasingly regulated sector’. The remaining three participants pointed either to the difficulties of working with people with different agendas across their institution, or the difficulties with gaining sufficient resources because research offices were seen as a ‘cost centre, not as an investment’.

Performance and Accountability Expectations by Staffing Subgroups

The response categories shown in Table 6.10 were then stratified by the abovementioned five main staffing subgroups \((n = 162)\)\(^{20}\), and analysed by frequency to explore response differences between groups. Each of the following five sections is preceded by a table which depicts the top one or two clear majority response categories (where available) from each of the three main focus areas (‘Communication’, ‘Performance Measures’; and, ‘Stakeholder Relations’); plus the additional aforementioned focus area of ‘Role Function’, across the four questionnaire items listed in Table 6.1 (see Q44 – Q47) for each of the five main staffing subgroups. These tables provide a snapshot of the main concerns or foci of each staffing subgroup in terms of the performance and accountability expectations placed on them.

Deputy Directors/Directors

As depicted in Table 6.11, this staffing subgroup felt accountable for meeting institutional research performance targets. They focused on achieving expected service levels through the provision of efficient and effective operations, with the general aim of decreasing ‘frustrations with bureaucracy’. Difficulties with aspects of workplace relations revolved around the expressed need for workplace recognition of the contribution of RMA work to research activity (this included the interrelated difficulty of gaining researcher compliance with policies and guidelines), and for central research offices to be seen as an institutional investment rather than a cost. Managing workloads was seen as an issue, particularly where high work levels impacted on participant capacity to be proactive or to focus on developmental activities.

\(^{20}\) The participants captured in the remaining three RMA staffing subgroups were not included in these analyses, given they are amalgams of smaller staffing subgroups. This lack of homogeneity evident in the five dominant staffing subgroups provides possible complicating factors when analysing performance and accountability expectations. However, perspectives from these three RMA staffing subgroups are captured in the preceding overview section and in occurrence of mention frequency totals referred to in Table 6.10.
Table 6.11 Deputy Directors/Directors: Top Emerging Response Categories Regarding Performance and Accountability Expectations \( (n = 20) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are you held most accountable for?</th>
<th>What do you most strive for in terms of your performance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Managing (Staff/Resources/ Processes)* 21</td>
<td>• Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Performance Expectations and Outcomes</td>
<td>• Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Efficiency (Time Management and Deadlines)</td>
<td>• Efficiency (Time Management and Deadlines)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What aspect of your role is least difficult to achieve?</th>
<th>What aspect of your role is most difficult to achieve?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Nil Responses</td>
<td>• Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Workload</td>
<td>• Workload</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note participants in this staffing subgroup did not indicate any aspect of their role as being least difficult to achieve.

**RMA (Grants/Finance)**

Key performance and accountability expectations of this staffing subgroup are depicted in Table 6.12. Participants indicated that they experience difficulties with their workloads, which peak particularly during grant application rounds. They also highlighted the increasing participation rates of researchers in grant rounds, leading to increased workloads without concomitant increases in RMA resourcing. Gaining researcher compliance in terms of funding body guidelines and contract deliverables was a key accountability of this subgroup, as was the need to be efficient whilst delivering a high degree of accuracy in their work.

This staffing subgroup also demonstrated investment in the research performance of their respective institution and the research successes of individual researchers. There was marked attention given to service, taking the form of facilitating research activity through participant efficiency and by reducing or minimising the administrative impost on researchers where possible. Difficulties were experienced in workplace relations when researchers: did not comply with deadlines or provide complete and accurate information/reports as required; or, in particular, did not recognise or encourage participant input or allow sufficient time for grant applications. The more routine aspects of administrative tasks were the least difficult aspects of participant work to achieve, particularly where a high level of expertise in administrative processes had been developed.

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21 *Note the response categories include earlier responses captured under ‘Role Functions’, which have relevance for each staffing subgroup. See Appendix J Coding Plan for details of each role function response category.
Table 6.12 RMA (Grants/Finance): Top Emerging Response Categories Regarding Performance and Accountability Expectations ($n = 53$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are you held most accountable for?</th>
<th>What do you most strive for in terms of your performance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Administering (Processing)*</td>
<td>• Efficiency (Time Management and Deadlines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accuracy</td>
<td>• Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compliance</td>
<td>• Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Efficiency (Time Management and Deadlines)</td>
<td>• Performance Expectations and Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accuracy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What aspect of your role is *least* difficult to achieve?

| Administering (Routine Aspects)*       | Workload                                                |
|                                        | Workplace Relations                                     |
|                                        | Resourcing                                              |
|                                        | Efficiency (Time Management and Deadlines)              |


RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)

As depicted in Table 6.13, this staffing subgroup perceived accountability for efficiency and accuracy in their work with an emphasis on service to students. Providing quick administrative turn-around, attention to detail and ensuring student satisfaction with the service levels provided, featured in what participants indicated they most strived to achieve. Difficulties in managing high workloads also featured, which in turn hampered participant work efficiency and ability to accomplish all required tasks in a timely manner. For a number of participants, providing service was seen as a least difficult aspect of their role given they either enjoyed being of assistance to or interacting with others, and/or they described providing a service to others as being their main role or function.

Table 6.13 RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students): Top Emerging Response Categories Regarding Performance and Accountability Expectations ($n = 37$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are you held most accountable for?</th>
<th>What do you most strive for in terms of your performance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Administering (Processing)*</td>
<td>• Efficiency (Time Management and Deadlines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accuracy</td>
<td>• Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Efficiency (Time Management and Deadlines)</td>
<td>• Accuracy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What aspect of your role is *least* difficult to achieve?

| Service                                  | Workload                                                |
|                                        | Efficiency (Time Management and Deadlines)              |

What aspect of your role is *most* difficult to achieve?

| Workload                                      | Efficiency (Time Management and Deadlines)              |
|                                             |                                                        |
RMA (Data/IT Systems)

As depicted in Table 6.14, this staffing subgroup was very much focused on: records management; IT operating systems; data integrity and accuracy; and, work efficiency. Participants indicated that they worked to provide accurate information or reports of high quality in an efficient manner and to deliver fast response times to queries. Difficulties arose when: IT systems were outdated or inadequate; there was a lack of staffing/resources or system expertise; unrealistic or ad hoc reporting (or data mining) demands were made on available IT systems; there was researcher resistance to providing the necessary data input, thereby hampering the need for complete and accurate records. Such issues impacted on participant efficiency levels or hampered workplace relations, especially in terms of service delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are you held most accountable for?</th>
<th>What do you most strive for in terms of your performance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Records Management (Data Integrity and Quality)*</td>
<td>• Work Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• IT System (Functionality)*</td>
<td>• Accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Efficiency (Time Management and Deadlines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• IT System (Functionality)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.14 RMA (Data/IT Systems): Top Emerging Response Categories Regarding Performance and Accountability Expectations ($n = 31$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What aspect of your role is least difficult to achieve?</th>
<th>What aspect of your role is most difficult to achieve?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Records Management (Data Integrity and Quality)*</td>
<td>• IT System (Functionality)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expertise (Knowledge Management)</td>
<td>• Records Management (Data Integrity and Quality)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Efficiency (Time Management and Deadlines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For a number of participants, providing reports or managing data was seen as a least difficult aspect of their role given they either had developed a high level of personal expertise in that area, and/or worked with well-developed systems (including instances where the data input function was performed by competent staff or where data input was controlled) designed to ensure high quality data capture.

RMA (Ethics)

As shown in Table 6.15, the focus of this staffing subgroup was very much on compliance. Participants perceived personal accountability for ensuring research ethics compliance with relevant legislation, guidelines and codes of conduct. Promoting and facilitating researcher compliance were activities participants focused; with almost equal attention devoted to
facilitating research through reducing administrative burdens on researchers by providing timely responses and collaborative service.

**Table 6.15** RMA (Ethics): Top Emerging Response Categories Regarding Performance and Accountability Expectations \((n = 21)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are you held most accountable for?</th>
<th>What do you most strive for in terms of your performance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Compliance</td>
<td>• Compliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administering (Processing)</td>
<td>• Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compliance</td>
<td>• Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What aspect of your role is <em>least</em> difficult to achieve?</th>
<th>What aspect of your role is <em>most</em> difficult to achieve?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Nil Responses</td>
<td>• Compliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Difficulties arose when participants worked within an organisational culture that either did not promote compliant behaviour, or alternatively, did not support participant efforts in ensuring compliant behaviour of researchers. In turn, tensions arising from the push-pull of ensuring compliance versus facilitating research in the form desired by researchers were perceived as having an impact on workplace relations. Obtaining annual reports or other required information from researchers was also indicated as an area of difficultly for participants – reflecting for some a lack of appreciation of the purpose for compliance. Participants in this staffing subgroup did not indicate any aspect of their role as being *least* difficult to achieve.

In this chapter it has already been established that in general terms the areas of efficiency, service and workplace relationships are at the forefront of RMA understandings of what they need to achieve (see Table 6.10). In the analysis reported above, when the participants are stratified into five staffing subgroups it is evident that: in four of the five groups, workplace relationships are found to be the most problematic area; and three of the five subgroups identify managing workload and achieving efficiency as the most difficult. The next section of this chapter seeks to provide more depth and insight into participant perspectives on the nature of their work by staffing subgroup.

**PERSPECTIVES OF RMA WORK**

**Describing the Job**

Participants were asked in the first interview to describe what their job was like \(Q2\).

Collectively, the responses depicted deadline driven, high pressure, and hectic workplaces of increasing complexity. Most reported their jobs to be interesting, even fascinating and challenging; with the type of work undertaken being for the most part enjoyable, if at times for
some, ‘…almost impossibly demanding…’ (1227). There was a common theme of interviewees seeing themselves as facilitators and supporters of their university’s research endeavours, described by one interviewee as a ‘…mixture of policing versus good news joy role…’ (1103).

Interviewees indicated they felt connected to the research success (or otherwise) of their institution, (described as ‘…highs and lows…’ by one participant (1207)) with a number describing their jobs as highly fulfilling. The more senior participants indicated that their work involved talking to a large number of people, both internal and external to the university, with frequent attendance at meetings. There was a marked concentration of effort towards reducing manual work, with a focus on incremental system changes and the adoption of various business processes aimed at streamlining and automating RMA work. The next step was to undertake further analyses of interviewee responses through stratifying the data, once again, by the five main staffing subgroups.

**Deputy Directors/Directors**

Research Deputy Directors/Directors formed the largest subgroup of interviewees. The majority of these interviewees indicated that their jobs were very interesting, challenging, stimulating and dynamic, with high levels of responsibility. One described his work as a ‘…pressure cooker job…’ (1126).

Several indicated that the diversity in terms of breadth and depth of their job’s portfolio was what kept them engaged in the role, with some highlighting the degrees of freedom they felt (and relished) in which to discharge their responsibilities. One interviewee touched on all of these aspects, but went further to indicate that the:

…prevailing, driving force…that provides all of the frustration and a great deal of the …challenges…comes from shortage of resources… (1111).

A further response category was the interactive nature of the positions, with Deputy Directors/Directors engaged internally with staff at all levels of the university; and externally with government departments, granting bodies, industry, and to some extent members of the community. In the words of one interviewee, this wide-ranging interaction meant that he was:

… always being exposed to new ideas in the research and innovation space and I guess with being charged with trying to maximise the university’s capability to maximise opportunities (1128).
RMA (Grants/Finance)

For this staffing subgroup, responses clustered around the constant deadline-driven nature of their work. One interviewee described their work environment as a ‘sausage factory’ at times because of the high volume turn-over, whilst another referred to the intense nature of the work environment. Others highlighted the inspiration they gained from working with researchers. The increasing demands of post-award work were commented on by one interviewee, who preferred to concentrate her attention on supporting researchers in the development or pre-award stage:

…because we like to think of ourselves as developing and supporting researchers and this stuff where you are just chasing up for missing documentation and detail on a final report is just grrrr….I know that kind of work really appeals to some people and I do not mind doing a proportion of it but when it starts to swamp everything else, when you feel like you are not doing a good job on the development side because so much of your time is taken up with post-award and meeting regulatory requirements, it starts to get very discouraging I think… (1232).

Facilitation and role diversity were key response categories for this staffing subgroup, in particular as expressed by the following interviewee:

You are a facilitator and it’s also diverse in terms of the sorts of tasks involved as well so everything from career development of early career researchers and postgraduate students all the way up to negotiating complex legal documents and I like that sort of diversity, it keeps you on your toes and keeps you interested... (1224).

RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)

Three of the four interviewees of this staffing subgroup reported they had very interesting and varied positions. The remaining interviewee (note the only one of the four from a Go8 university) reported a very busy position in a very high volume area with limited decision-making capacity. This is at odds with the degrees of freedom in decision-making capacity reported by the other three. It could be that the differing perspectives captured in the interviews highlight the effects of working in areas of high volume student numbers resulting in more routinised work, in comparison to areas with lower student traffic; with staff in the latter situation able to have wider parameters in which to operate.
**RMA (Ethics)**

For this staffing subgroup, the main responses were that their positions were interesting, enjoyable, fascinating and stimulating. One interviewee raised the issue of the challenges of being in a position of expertise whilst being locked into committee-based decision making – a work feature which arguably is a particular identifier of ethics administration.

**RMA (Data/IT Systems)**

Three of the four interviewees reported their work as interesting and enjoyable. The remaining interviewee highlighted tensions and challenges involved with the lag time of IT innovation and systems in the HE sector, compared to his/her experience in other sectors.

**Typical RMA Working Week**

The interviewees were then asked to describe a typical working week (Q3). Most found it hard to answer this question for two main reasons. Firstly, the cyclical nature of the work involved meant that working rhythms shifted over the year. Secondly, interviewees indicated they had less ability to follow personal work plans and to act in a proactive manner, given unexpected academic requirements or imposed reports or other functions added to their day-to-day work in an ad hoc manner. This meant they found a ‘typical working week’ difficult to articulate given the reportedly unpredictable nature of their workplaces.

A common response from the overall group was that interviewees were engaged in a high volume of meetings, with high workloads that were deadline driven. Workplaces were seen as very ad hoc and mostly reactive, with an ongoing appreciation of the need for pro-activity and strategy. What was most evident were the very long hours of work that this participant group indicated they undertook, and the care and commitment expressed in relation to their work. A high volume of email traffic was frequently reported by interviewees – a workplace characteristic discussed in Chapter 7. Further analyses of interviewee responses regarding their working week was then undertaken through stratifying the data by the five staffing subgroups.

**Deputy Directors/Directors**

Attending, chairing and/or convening meetings was the dominant feature of this staffing subgroup’s working week. Meetings included weekly discussions between interviewees and their direct line executive manager (primarily a DVC or PVC), operational and/or planning meetings with line staff, plus attendance at various institutional level committee meetings. A number of interviewees indicated attendance at CRC meetings, and/or conducting meetings with industry partners regarding, for example, joint collaborations which were either in place or in
the negotiation phase. One-on-one meetings with academic researchers occurred regularly to
discuss research collaborations, contract negotiations, or to review funding issues and similar.

For some, there were so many weekly meetings (including travel between multiple campuses
and/or interstate conference attendance) that any operational work (for example addressing
e-mails or reading documents) was done out of hours. Some indicated that their operational
work and attendance at meetings took up so much of the working day that developmental issues
were not given the attention and time needed. The working week also changed depending on
the research life-cycle phase of office activity. The range of developmental matters referred to
by this subgroup is demonstrated in the following responses:

…trying to think about where do we want to head ourselves? What can I and the office do
to boost the level of research effort [of the university]? (1231).

… [responsibility for] convening of a working group of senior academics to look at
rewriting the university’s guidelines for research centres… (1128).

…20 per cent of my week would be in planning and policy writing… (1103).

…there is a real need to do a lot of developmental work, policy development, strategy
development, new programs, better coordinating and making more cohesive programs that
exist, cultural change initiatives and so forth… (1111).

**RMA (Grants/Finance)**

Interviewees from this staffing subgroup indicated strong peak and ebb cycles of work. Peak
periods were generally lead-up times to grant application deadlines, with almost all of the
interviewees indicating involvement with major Australian grants rounds, such as ARC
Discovery, Linkages, and/or NHMRC. Peak periods could mean extended work hours, with
managers in this staffing subgroup indicating a focus on monitoring workload allocations across
teams during busy times.

Interviewees indicated responsibilities for: the review of contracts and grant applications;
advising on overheads; assisting academics with the compilation of research grant budgets; or
acting as readers of grant application, which was performed specifically by the most senior of
this staffing subgroup. Responsibility for advising on compliance issues, eligibility criteria
and/or conditions of award also featured. This subgroup was also very involved with
conducting, facilitating and/or organising presentations, seminars and workshops on grant round
specifics; with some emphasising a training focus on early career researchers. Some interviewees indicated involvement with post-award activities. For example: ensuring academics were on target to spend their research grants within set timeframes, so that no monies had to be handed back to granting bodies; plus responsibility for the chasing up of research milestone and final reports.

**RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)**

A significant feature of this staffing subgroup was the very different modes in which the four interviewees were primarily operating from or focused on when discussing their working week. The first of these work modes is what could be described as ‘Executive Administrator’, with the interviewee undertaking, for example: high-end administrative roles for the Dean of Graduate Studies; managing communication across university level committees and groups; and, program managing work specific to the Dean’s area of responsibility.

The second work mode can be described as ‘Processor’. Here the interviewee was predominantly tasked with undertaking the processing of student applications, and advising students and academics on relevant processes. The third work mode is described as ‘Tactician’, where the interviewee concentrated on developing methods to assist and support graduate students and supervisors in all facets of the HDR lifecycle. Descriptions of self-initiated analyses of past performances to inform future approaches, plus the development of strategies to engage academic supervisors to take up training offered to them, are some examples given of this work mode.

The remaining work mode identified in the response analyses is ‘Policy Advisor’, where the interviewee was charged with developing and advising on policy. The described working week was focused on trouble shooting and working through procedural issues, policy dissemination, plus determining and rectifying policy/procedural gaps. Further research involving a larger number of participants from this staffing subgroup would test the applicability and robustness of the four identified work modes.

**RMA (Ethics)**

Similar to the previous staffing subgroup, this subgroup likewise demonstrated four distinct work modes in their responses. The first of these could be described as ‘Manager’, with the interviewee indicating a focus on resolving issues, moving projects forward, staffing performance, plus developing and reviewing policy. Similar to the previous section, the second work mode could be described as ‘Processor’, where the interviewee’s main responsibilities lay
in contacting clients, adjusting and modifying ethics protocols and project profiles. The third work mode is called ‘Advisor’, where the interviewee’s focus is on developing, resourcing and advising a number of academics who in turn act as advisors on research ethics. The writing of briefing notes and advising individual researchers were also part of the responsibilities mentioned at interview. The fourth and final work mode can be described as ‘Liaison’, where the interviewee demonstrated the ability to look at a range of research ethics matters from an academic point of view, then crossing back over into the administrative/regulatory domain before providing advice on constructive ways of moving an issue forward. In other words, the interviewee acted as a liaison between the needs/ambitions of the researchers and the regulatory frameworks in which the research projects operated.

There was also a developmental aspect to the working week, with the focus on developing research integrity training for postgraduate students intended to foster and promote research ethics at an early stage of scholarly development. Further research involving a larger number of participants from this staffing subgroup would test the applicability and robustness of the four identified work modes.

**RMA (Data/IT Systems)**

The responses to this question varied for this staffing subgroup depending on the developmental stage of their respective institution’s research system. The three distinct stages identified in the interview responses are described as: ‘Planning/Development’; ‘Implementation’; and ‘Operation/Management’. The ‘Planning/Development’ stage featured holding discussions on system development alternatives and recognition of the need to reduce: paperwork; duplication of records; and manual effort. The desire to integrate systems, including the move to major databases was expressed. This stage was about project scoping, obtaining ‘buy-in’ and selling/promoting the idea of moving to alternative systems. Having a senior ‘champion’ of the proposed system was seen by the interviewee as crucial to its successful adoption.

The ‘Implementation’ stage featured responsibility for rolling out modules for testing by ‘friends’, and meeting with ‘business owners’ – these being groups whose requirement needs were to be taken into account in the system design and operation. In addition, this stage involved tasks such as developing/issuing bulletins of system updates and timetables for the planned upgrade/implementation roll-out. There was also coordination/organisation and/or facilitation of overview sessions with end-users, and the creation of end-user documentation. These and related aspects of project management activities featured in the responses of the interviewee working in the implementation phase of the life-cycle of their institution’s research system.
The remaining stage identified as ‘Operation/Management’, involved devoting a large part of the year to data input by ensuring people across the institution supplied required information. This included undertaking forms of data verification and liaising with staff to correct entries or obtain more evidence before moving into the reporting phase, depending on formal reporting deadlines and ad hoc reporting requirements. The closed loop between these three identified product life-cycle phases of a university research system was demonstrated by the interviewee in the ‘Operational/Management’ stage; who indicated that attention was being paid to developing new software, and that the process of moving towards a new database had begun with the planned commencement of a testing phase.

Although outside the remit of this chapter, the constant upgrading of systems is arguably a feature of university life necessitated, in particular, by the changing, evolving and complex information needs of university management. System upgrades were found to be necessary mainly because of shifting reporting requirements imposed by governments and other regulatory bodies, including auditing and quality assessment frameworks. At the time of study, an example of the relationship between government information requirements and university research data/IT system development can be directly attributed to the then planned implementation of the RQF, a matter reported in Chapter 8. Finally, as indicated in the opening chapter, the increasing level of administrative work involved with meeting the information and reporting requirements of DEEWR (now DIISRTE) and other regulatory bodies, in particular those associated with auditing and quality assessment related activities, has recently been raised as a workload concern by Australian academics (Bexley, et al., 2011).

What Stakeholders Need to Know About RMA Work

Participants in the first-round interview were asked what they wanted other stakeholders to know about Research Services work (Q8). The most striking feature in these responses was the importance participants gave to their own work mien in the context of performing their roles. The responses indicated a group who report high degrees of ownership of their various responsibilities and dedication to their work. A noticeably common response was the need, as expressed by interviewees, to remain positive. For example:

… how easy it is to present things positively and succinctly and confidently because when you do that the academics want that reassurance so …you need to be confident in your knowledge and present it in a way that gives the academic confidence…and in a good humoured way I think. We have trouble with academics ringing several different people to try and get the answer…and sometimes it’s about whether they either do not believe the
first person or did not get the answers they wanted… now there are some kind of grey area things which are judgement calls but I tend to try and have a fairly clear view of which way I would lean … (1234).

Positivity was seen as an important feature despite interviewees having roles which required giving negative feedback to academic researchers at times. For example, when asked what other stakeholders needed to know about RMA work, one interviewee responded thus:

….that we are a very professional group…that we are often underrated and we are here to facilitate and help. Even though the message we often have to give is negative, we actually want to help them to get it right and we are proud of our university and our research effort… (1222).

A further category of responses comprised requests that there be a greater appreciation for the roles of RMA staff – particularly in relation to information-gathering activities:

… I am the messenger, I am not the person who is asking something that is just for the sake of asking, if I am asking for that information there is actually a legitimate purpose in asking for it and I am often reporting it on to someone else. So I guess that in the activities that are undertaken by research office staff, we are often facilitators of research, we are not trying to stop research and I think that needs a greater amount of attention from the university community. You know they [academics] label everything as ‘administrivia’ every time you ask them a question but there is often a legitimate purpose in asking for that information and often down the track it means it might make a difference as to how much funding the university is going to get or something like that. So yeah I think …its recognising the legitimacy of what we are doing (1207).

[RMA work] probably … its underappreciated …and not just me personally but all the people, I would have a hundred people reporting stuff to me and in many cases those people, their work is underappreciated, …and the importance of the stuff they send to me is…not appreciated (1208).

There were also calls for academics to keep abreast of compliance and policy frameworks relating to research, with some interviewees recommending that academics need to become more aware of what grant application assessment processes entail. For example:
…I would love to have the ability to show academics the process of what goes on with their grants not just in a presented format of this is what happens there, but actually have them sit in on assessments of grants so they can fully understand what is going on once it leaves us so that they can start getting an appreciation for what we are actually trying to get them to do before it goes to be assessed… (1221).

In addition, that there needs to be a greater awareness of the value-adding role of RMA staff:

…the opportunities for value-adding, the opportunities to help your university go just that one step up beyond what it could do just with the skills of the academics… (1227).

The interconnectedness of RMA work with the work of other stakeholders also featured:

… research services work does not happen in isolation, when we do things we depend on other people to get back to us and thus when a delay happens, which is usually what research services staff are blamed for, it is not always that someone in research services has been slack. It’s often that someone, out in what academics laughingly refer to as the ‘real world’, has not got back to us. The ‘real world’ seems to be anywhere that you are not and in fact people in big business, small business, all sorts of places – everyone can be slack and everyone can be efficient and good and those traits are not specific or isolated to one particular group of people… (1229).

One theme that emerged from the analysis was a sense of connectedness with the work and successes and failures of academic researchers:

…just after the ARC results came out and we were just chatting to all of the researchers and they were really surprised that we cared so much, they did not realise that we get really excited and we are really disappointed if things do not go well … it’s our five days a week that we are here you know caring about it… (1204).

… one of the things that I actually like about being in this role is getting into that nitty-gritty dealing with individual academics and being part of their successes and failures and hearing what they want to do. You feel you are a part of life there on the ground, in the university, and you are not just a paper shuffler… (1231).
In short, interviewees presented themselves as facilitators of university research activities who were strongly invested in the research performance of their respective institutions. Dedication to their work with a high degree of ownership for their role responsibilities was indicated. Interviewees reported that they felt their work in the main to be underrated and unrecognised by researchers, in particular, with some expressing the need for their work to be legitimised in the eyes of other stakeholders. Calls were also raised for academics to become more aware of their responsibilities in terms of compliance, and for them to develop a greater understanding of the interconnected role of RMA staff with governing regulations and policies, particularly in terms of information gathering.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The findings on the degree of perceived changes to RMA work provided detail to the major drivers and influencing factors in the workplace, which are known to be: driving an ongoing evolution of RMA work; creating tensions in RMA/Researcher workplace relations; and, feeding the push for greater recognition of RMA work and contribution. Much of the analysis in the chapter is based on staffing subgroups and one of the early contributions in the chapter was to specify the roles and responsibilities of those groups. It was challenging to pull this highly diverse and detailed material together, but a structure of this type was fundamental to generating the findings.

The participant views gathered in this study regarding roles, responsibilities, performance and accountabilities provide a snapshot of the operating landscape of university research service offices in Australia. The resultant themes and response patterns provide suitable material from which to develop attitudinal scales and similar fine-grained research instrumentation for future research in this area. These findings address two of the three aims behind this area of the study’s inquiry, the third was addressed by the development of ‘Statements of Responsibility’ developed from the data.

In reference to the time pressure and escalating demands both internal and external participants perceive they are performing a ‘balancing act’ between facilitating research activity whilst ensuring compliance. Both commitment to their work and personal investment in successful outcomes were expressed in relation to their workplace rapport with academics, and with respect to their institution’s research performance. In addition, differences in the performance and accountability expectations found for each staffing subgroup highlighted the diverse nature of the sub-elements of university RMA. However, there remained a consistent and across
groups’ focus on efficiency, the management of workloads, and research facilitation or service provision.

A key variation in the operational landscape of participant workplaces was whether or not participants were working in an environment where their work was perceived to be valued or recognised. The level of academic researcher compliance – particularly in terms of the overarching organisational culture and whether it supported RMA efforts to ensure compliance with policies and guidelines – also appeared to have differing types of impacts on RMA functioning, effectiveness, and associated workplace relations. These and related issues will be revisited in the final chapter.

The next chapter examines workplace relationships in more detail, together with inquiry into stakeholder interactions and the forms of communication typically used in the workplace by participants.
CHAPTER 7
WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

This chapter provides an in-depth exploration of how RMA perceive their working relationships with stakeholders, the nature of their interactions and how they feel about them. It presents participant perspectives as to the level of interchange with internal and external stakeholders and, specifically, how they describe their engagement with academics, research students and staff in their work area. It also draws on questionnaire data where participants describe their most and least satisfying workplace relations. An added dimension emerges from the examples provided of typical workplace interactions between the interviewee group and academic researchers and research students. The themes identified from the data analysis specific to the relationship between RMA and academic staff also forms the basis of a conceptual model that is presented in Chapter 9.

Continuing further with the theme of relations and interaction, the chapter also extends into the area of typical modes of workplace communication, together with their most and least preferred forms of communication.

Table 7.1 summarises the thematic structure of the chapter, together with the research questions posed and corresponding data source. For ease of reference, the questionnaire items can be found in Appendix E and the interview items in Appendix H.

Table 7.1 Overview of Chapter’s Thematic Structure, Items and Response Rate

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMATIC STRUCTURE</th>
<th>ITEMS AND RESPONSE RATE</th>
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| WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS: SETTING THE SCENE | This section presents responses ($n = 194$) to four questionnaire items:  
Q36) Please indicate what type of working relationship you typically have with (listed stakeholder) groups.  
Q37-38) Which of your working relationships are the most/least satisfying and why?  
Q39) What one word or phrase would best capture the essence of your engagement with: a) research students? b) academics? and c) staff within your work area? |
| ILLUSTRATIONS OF WORKPLACE INTERACTIONS    | This section presents interviewee ($n = 37$) responses to two questions from the first interview:  
Q6-7) What typically occurs between research managers and administrators and academics/research students? Can you provide specific examples from your own experience? |
| WORKPLACE COMMUNICATIONS                   | This section presents responses ($n = 194$) to three questionnaire items:  
Q40) What would be your typical form/s of communication with each of the following (listed stakeholder) groups?  
Q41-42) What is your most/least preferred mode of communication, why? |
WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS: SETTING THE SCENE

‘Typical’ Working Relationships

In the questionnaire, participants were asked to describe the ‘type of working relationship they typically have’ with nine stakeholder groups (Q36). The latter are listed in the Figure below, and include those groups internal to the institution (‘Staff Within Your Work Area’, ‘Non-Academic Staff External to Work Area’, ‘Academics’ and ‘Research Student’s) and those external to the institution (‘Government Funding Agencies’, ‘Non-Government Funding Agencies’, ‘DEST (DIISRTE)’, ‘Business/Industry’, and ‘General Public’). The four response categories provided were: ‘Positive’; ‘Mixed’; ‘No Involvement’; and ‘Negative’. The results are presented in Figure 7.2.

As indicated in Figure 7.2, overall, where a relationship exists, it was perceived as positive. Almost half of the participants reported no working relationships with members of the general public, and almost two-fifths indicated no involvement with research students. Relationships nominated as ‘mixed’ were highest for the group ‘Academics’; followed by ‘Non-Academic Staff External to the Participants’ Work Area’. There is an almost total absence of working relationships nominated as ‘negative’.

Figure 7.2 Typical Participant Working Relationship with Key Stakeholder Groups (n = 194)
Main Stakeholders Workplace Relationships: Key Descriptors

Questionnaire participants were asked: Q39) “What one word or phrase would best capture the essence of your engagement with: a) research students? b) academics? and c) staff within your work area?” (see Table 7.1). The predominantly one or two word responses were converted from an SPSS format to QSR.NVivo 8 for analysis. The data from a, b and c \((n = 191, 190, \text{ and } 190, \text{ respectively})\) were separately analysed for common response categories. Figures 7.3 to 7.5 shows the percentage frequency of the occurrence (total count) of mention for the emerging categories for each item; noting that responses could be coded to more than one.

Figure 7.3 Single-Word Descriptors of Working Relationships with Research Students by Occurrence \((n = 216)\)

As shown in Figure 7.3, just over a third of participants described their working relationships with Research Students in terms of being ‘Supportive’ (including ‘encouraging’ and ‘appreciative’); with a further third of participants indicating they had ‘Minimal or No Contact’ with research students (the latter finding was also reflected in the responses to an earlier questionnaire item, the results of which are presented in Figure 7.2). The remaining 30 per cent of responses were spread over the six other response categories shown in Figure 7.3.
Figure 7.4 Single-Word Descriptors of Working Relationships with Academics by Occurrence ($n = 234$)

Figure 7.5 Single-Word Descriptors of Working Relationships with Staff Within Participant’s Work Area by Occurrence ($n = 236$)
The most frequently nominated descriptor of relationships in Figures 7.4 and 7.5 was ‘Supportive’ (including ‘facilitative’ and ‘positive’), which occurred in very similar proportions for relationships with academic staff, as for relationships with staff in participants’ own work area. However, the key difference between what participants said about the working relationships with ‘Staff in Participant’s Work Area’ stakeholder group and the previous two, is the higher reporting of a greater degree of ‘informal’ interactions (24 per cent) and ‘collaborative’ relationships (15 per cent). There is also no reference to stimulating and inspiring elements connected to working with staff in participant’s work area, as there is in connection to working with research students; or the challenging and complex elements in relationships reported in connection with working with academic staff. Differences in perception of the nature of relationships with different stakeholder groups follows through into the next section about the most and least satisfying working relationships.

**Workplace Relationships: Most and Least Satisfying**

Questionnaire participants were asked in open response format to indicate their most and least satisfying workplace relationship, and to explain their choices (Q37 and Q38 – see Table 7.1). There were 159 valid responses to these two open-ended questions (82 per cent of total participants); and sometimes more than one working relationship was nominated. Of the total references to relationships 248 were about ‘most satisfying’, and 141 about ‘least satisfying’. The responses were entered into QSR.NVivo 8, and the text was coded into stakeholder groups. Of the nine original stakeholder groups referred to in Figure 7.2, ‘Non-Government Funding Agencies’ and ‘Government Funding Agencies’ were coded as ‘Funding Agencies’. ‘Business/Industry’ and ‘General Public’ were merged into one group (see Figure 7.6). In addition, a new stakeholder group ‘Management’, was created to capture references to senior university management and/or participant direct-line managers. The resulting number of stakeholder groups was eight.

The number of references to each stakeholder group and the proportion of those indicating whether the working relationship identified was the most or least satisfying are indicated in Figure 7.6. The bars in the graph are presented from highest to lowest most satisfying workplace relationship by occurrence of mention. More than one working relationship may have been nominated by participants.
Figure 7.6 Most (n = 248) and Least (n = 141) Satisfying Working Relationship by Occurrence

As shown in Figure 7.6, the majority of respondents mentioned relationships with academics, and of these, most were nominated as the ‘most satisfying’. In addition to the eight groups displayed in Figure 7.6, responses extended into other types of categories including: ‘Workplace Relations in General’ and ‘Functional Role Aspects’, where participants indicated a most or least satisfying aspect of their work, as opposed to a working relationship per se. Relationships with groups and other categories of response are detailed below. Participant response frequency is mentioned in the brackets beside each category. For example, 94 participants indicated that their working relationship with academics as being ‘most satisfying’.

Academics: ‘Most Satisfying’ (n = 94)
A majority of participants described their working relationship with academics as the ‘most satisfying’. The open-ended responses were coded further into six categories: ‘Sense of Purpose’; ‘Sense of Being Valued’; ‘Sense of Achievement (Rewarding Work)’; ‘Intellectual Engagement/Stimulation’; ‘Work Makes a Difference’; or ‘Not Specified’. Responses could be coded to more than one. The percentage frequency of occurrence (total count) of mention is presented in Figure 7.7.
‘Sense of Purpose’; ‘Sense of Being Valued’; and ‘Sense of Achievement (Rewarding Work)’, were the three leading response categories. Each of these categories (with the exception of ‘Not Specified’) is elaborated on below.

**Sense of Purpose (n = 30)**

Thirty participants indicated that working with academic researchers was ‘most satisfying’ because of the ‘sense of purpose’ gained from working with them, and building a productive relationship. One participant noted that they ‘liked’ the idea of ‘contributing’ to ‘their (the academics’) career in research’ (32018). Another comment identified that:

> Academic staff are the change agents and if we can get them on board with initiatives and seemingly bureaucratic decisions then we have made a positive difference to the research education environment… (32148).

**Sense of Being Valued (n = 29)**

Twenty-nine participants reported that working with academics was most satisfactory in instances in which the participant’s advice, input and/or expertise was valued. For example:
When academics treat our advice seriously and see that we can add value to the process this is most satisfying (32223).

My working relationships with academics are the most satisfying because almost universally they treat me as an equal in my area of expertise. They are happy to discuss issues and hear my views and advice… I know I am highly valued (32307).

Recognition of the complementarity of the participants’ (RMA) skill set to those of academic researchers was also evident:

I enjoy working with most senior academics: those who are smart and who are prepared to listen to advice about the areas in which I have expertise. I enjoy the recognition that comes when academics begin to realise that you are good at what you do and that you can help them to achieve their goals (32182).

Relationships with academics because I feel I am able to assist in an area where they do not have as much expertise as I do and when we go through a long and exhaustive process and eventually are successful in obtaining a grant it is very fulfilling… (32200).

**Sense of Achievement (Rewarding Work) (n = 28)**
Twenty eight participants expressed a sense of achievement, which they derived from their work with academic staff. Two examples follow, the latter of which also refers to working with research students:

...dealing with successful grantees – I get personal satisfaction out of being involved in helping to finalise and submit applications and seeing them successful and share the joy of successful grantees… (32279).

I take a huge amount of satisfaction from working with research students and academics. Especially, when I am able to assist them to come up with a solution to a regulatory or ethical problem in a way that actually enhances their research design… (31314).

**Intellectual Engagement/Stimulation (n = 10)**
Ten of the participants indicated they found working with academics ‘most satisfying’ because: they found them to be interesting people to work with; that it was possible to ‘learn a lot’ (32060) in the process; and they generally enjoyed the intellectual stimulation and engagement. One participant noted that working with academics is ‘usually most satisfying’, adding that
'One of the major reasons behind accepting the position was the belief that change could be effected in a more intellectual environment' (31070). Closely aligned with the enjoyment is intellectual excitement and personal growth.

**Sense of Work Impact** \((n = 9)\)

Nine participants described their work or input as having an impact, or that it ‘makes a difference’, thereby leading to a sense of satisfaction obtained from their work with academics. For example:

…relationships with supervisors of HDR students and Graduate Research Coordinators in academic areas are most satisfying because I am in a position to form excellent partnerships with them in relation to managing and supporting students and these partnerships provide real benefits for students (32020).

Working with academics to help develop strong applications for research funding is the most rewarding aspect of the role. It is the one area where I can really have a direct impact on the outcome (32025).

**Academics: ‘Least Satisfying’ \((n = 38)\)**

A sense of embattlement or sense of being diminished and/or devalued by academic staff could be detected from the 38 responses that indicated working relationships with academics were the ‘least satisfying’. The responses fell into roughly equal and somewhat interrelated areas. The first of these were instances where academics did not cooperate with participants in administrative processes, thereby demonstrating non-compliant behaviours, in the main. This included academics that were frustrated or impatient with various regulatory or compliance and/or administrative processes. Some examples:

Researchers are (understandably) frustrated with the bureaucratic requirements of research and often (unfairly) bear resentment towards research administration (31141).

Working with academics who constantly fight against the process which in turn only causes delays and greater discontent with the outcome. Often feel this is a direct result of our office’s involvement and loudly inform others of this – neglecting to say that they refused to meet our requests (32228).

The second group of responses related mainly to the ‘academic/administrative’ divide, evidenced through forms of condescension expressed by academic researchers towards
participants, thereby creating conflicts and tensions in workplace relationships. In the words of one participant:

Academics – these can be some of the most positive interactions but also the most frustrating. Mainly because of relative status perception of Academic versus General staff and perception that a General Staff person could not add value to an academic’s area of expertise (32256).

The third group of responses was about the lack of appreciation by academic researchers of the value of participant’s input or advice. The responses do show, however, that this perceived lack of understanding or appreciation was seen to be changing. For example:

…relationships with those (increasingly few) academics remaining in the system who do not recognise the professionalism and important role of staff in my area, that is, who treat them as lackeys or verbal punching bags (32020).

However it would appear by the following response that there is still some way to go before the value-adding potential of RMA is universally recognised or acknowledged:

…facilitating research means that as administrators we get a good feel for when a proposal is in the right area or written well. But no matter how much advice you offer it is not taken seriously until exactly the same advice is offered by one of their academic colleagues. Also if they get the grant it was all their doing but if they do not get the grant it was because the Research Office did not give them enough support (32184).

The advent of the RQF was also raised as a source of tension:

Some ‘established’ researchers do not understand the evolving nature of research in Australia – this can lead to conflicts about the importance of things like the RQF (31112).

**Staff Within Your Work Area: ‘Most Satisfying’ (n = 56)**

Of the 56 participants who nominated working with staff in their work area was ‘most satisfying’, 24 identified that staff in their area understood participant work pressures and were best placed to: provide support and friendship; be accepting; ‘sympathise’ when things go wrong; and, ‘celebrate when things go well’ (32200). Teamwork also figured largely in satisfaction for 19 participants; featuring shared achievements, voicing ideas and exchange of advice and information. One participant elaborated:
The working relationship within the grants team is good. The team meets weekly to discuss issues and explore new ideas, etc. Everyone has a voice and decisions are reached democratically. Much of this is because we have an excellent manager who has a consultative and inclusive approach (32276).

For 10 participants, the relationships with staff within their work area were seen as facilitative of personal and collective professional growth and/or skills development and enhancement. For example:

... this is because open communication and a sense of not being embarrassed if you say something can help with the communication and decisions. It also allows things to flow freely which in turn make it a happier work environment ... and you also know you have the support of your co-workers (32241).

The remaining responses did not specify a reason for this choice.

*Staff Within Your Work Area: ‘Least Satisfying’ (n = 13)*

There were far fewer references to finding relationships with staff within the work area ‘least satisfying’. Five participants gave examples where staff were uncooperative or difficult to work with and/or manage. For example, ‘unskilled and lazy – and do not care’ (32181), or the case of:

…working with some interstate campus personnel within the Research Office ... mainly because they do not wish to work as a team (32284).

Four participants pointed to workplace instability being caused by: budget cuts (32058); poor leadership; or lack of development opportunities affecting staff morale, thereby making the environment difficult to work in. The remaining responses were about specific interpersonal difficulties, particularly in instances of conflicts in small team operations.

*Research Students: ‘Most Satisfying’ (n = 41)*

The responses in this category could be grouped into five further areas (shown as subheadings ordered by highest to lowest majority responses), which were found to be similar to those reported for ‘most satisfactory’ working relationships with academics. Participant responses may crossover more than one of these categories.
Sense of Achievement (Rewarding Work) \((n = 16)\)

These 16 participants indicated they ‘enjoyed’ following the research student journey from enrolment to graduation; seeing the student’s development unfold over time. This is exemplified in the following quotation:

> I particularly enjoy working with research students. It is very satisfying to watch their development over the period of their candidature (32191).

Sense of Purpose \((n = 14)\)

Fourteen participants reported that they enjoyed facilitating research student work by assisting students in the achievement of their goals, thereby deriving a sense of productive effort from these working relationships, whilst appreciating that providing support to research students was the purpose for which they were employed. For example:

> Research Students because they are our income and helping them achieves their goals in the most efficient time possible. Providing them the service and information that they need to enable them to complete their research (32331).

Sense of Being Valued \((n = 9)\)

Nine participants felt that research students appreciated and respected their advice, particularly in terms of compliance with various research-related processes. For example:

> Working with research students is the most satisfying because they are usually pleasant and thankful for any assistance provided (32024).

Sense of Work Impact \((n = 9)\)

Nine participants reported that they felt they could be part of the research process, and that their contribution to the work of research students made a difference. For example:

> Training of research students and academic staff in ethics and principles of responsible research are particularly satisfying in so much as I enjoy teaching these things and they have the potential to contribute to a better research environment (31048).

Intellectual Engagement/Stimulation \((n = 7)\)

In turn, seven participants indicated they enjoyed working with research students because they found the interactions to be mostly positive, enthusiastic, and/or interesting. In the words of one participant:
Research students – they are generally highly motivated to succeed and tend to be open
minded and thoughtful (32219).

Research Students: ‘Least Satisfying’ (n = 5)
Primarily, participants reported problems with students who were ‘ill-informed’ (31179) about
processes or did not follow guidelines; and who wanted the participant to fix the problems that
arose from this non-compliance, which then took a lot of the participant’s time.

Non-Academic Staff External to Work Area: ‘Most Satisfying’ (n = 25)
Twelve participants in this response category indicated they enjoyed working with non-
academic staff outside their work area because the interaction was predominantly productive.
Along similar lines, a further four participants indicated they enjoyed the teamwork aspects
involved in operating with this group. Seven of the responses under this category indicated that
non-academic staff appreciated the various work efforts of participants, and hence these
working relationships were satisfying. The remaining responses were either about the
enjoyment of working for or with people of high calibre, such as department or faculty
managers or working with people who were on a ‘…similar wave-length and experience…’

Non-Academic Staff External to Work Area: ‘Least Satisfying’ (n = 34)
These 34 responses fell into two main areas of concern. First, that there was perceived to be a
level of misunderstanding about the role of the Research Services Office in general, or about
individual RMA roles by those external to participants’ work areas. Such misunderstandings
reportedly created tensions between 12 participants and other non-academic groups. In the
words of one of the participants:

Some staff outside my area (academic and non-academic) are frequently misinformed
about my role and see the Research Office as a barrier to their workflow rather than a
supportive asset (32025).

Eleven participants perceived that other administration groups outside their area did not perform
to the same level to which the participants held themselves accountable. In other words, where
participants perceived other administration groups as having a lack of client focus or not
appearing to be working for the ‘…benefit of the university…’ (32111). A lack of attention to
detail, not following processes, or being slow to act, were also part of participant complaints about other administration groups outside research service offices. As an example:

Non-Academic staff external to my area – I constantly have to correct their mistakes, they do not follow procedures/rules and they do not seek advice when they should, they ask me to perform tasks without providing complete information and I am asked to complete tasks that are not my responsibility (32114).

The remaining responses indicating dissatisfaction included, for example, when other administrators: provided research students with incorrect information; made problematic demands for information; or, were involved with specific cases of conflict with individual participants.

**Funding Agencies: ‘Most Satisfying’ (n = 12)**

Not all participants would have had direct involvement with funding agencies, but there were a number who indicated positive working relationships with this stakeholder group. Those who gave reasons spoke mostly of the enjoyment of working with funding agencies towards the achievement of successful funding, or in terms of ‘…professionals dealing with similar problems...’ (32214).

**Funding Agencies: ‘Least Satisfying’ (n = 11)**

The responses under this heading were about the problems dealing with the bureaucracy of funding agencies (primarily government funding agencies), which translated into organisational unresponsiveness resulting in participants finding it difficult to build working relationships with government departmental staff. For instance:

...funding agencies are difficult to build relationships with and thus seem removed and distant (31105).

Other examples given by participants include difficulties in obtaining ‘…succinct and timely answers…’ from funding agencies (32054), plus a lack of consultation when government bodies make changes which affect participant work. Major delays in contract negotiations with government funding bodies were also cited as being problematic, whilst for one participant the problem was a lack of IP commercialisation expertise:

...legal departments in funding agencies (especially Government Departments), many do not have knowledge of research and treat research as another good or service which it is
not, or do not understand how IP commercialisation occurs which leads to stupid
cversations about how IP should be managed (32065).

Management: ‘Most Satisfying’ (n = 9)
In the main, these responses were about the professional and personal support participants
received from direct line management, including that their managers were: ‘supportive’,
‘receptive’, ‘consultative’, ‘encouraging’, and/or providing motivation and leadership. For
example:

My relationship with my manager because she is a good manager – she always gives me
clear directives, is supportive and listens to any advice I have to give and she fosters good
relationships within her office (31230).

For the small number of responses referring to senior university executive, it was about how the
participants felt ‘honoured’, ‘engaged’, ‘supported’, and/or ‘satisfied’ in their work, which was
aimed at facilitating research performance targets or supporting university policy decisions.

Management: ‘Least Satisfying’ (n = 20)
Participants indicated two main areas of conflict regarding their working relationships with
management. For some the problem was the approach taken by the manager/management,
including: unrealistic expectations of them by management; inconsistent decision making;
bullying; and lack of leadership from that quarter. In the words of one participant:

I work with some senior people who really distress me with their lack of leadership and
impoverished communication skills. It bothers me greatly to have to work with people who
are poor thinkers, have little understanding of people and who are careless about how they
convey their thoughts and decisions. I feel they are undermining me (32152).

For others the problems were that managers/management were not consultative; did not listen or
seek input from key staff; undervalued the participant’s role; or, there was no recognition of the
participant’s contribution. For instance:

Management are bean counters who do not treat us as specialised and valuable workers.
We are seen as disposable at the whim of funding decisions that happen way above our
heads (32060).
Business/Industry and General Public: ‘Most Satisfying’ (n = 7)
These seven responses were quite varied, highlighting the differing foci of participants charged with working with these stakeholder groups. Responses ranged from participants enjoying the ‘breadth of ideas’ or business culture in their interactions with business/industry; to those who felt they were serving the general public through their work efforts. As an example:

…it is a joy to explain the key strengths of this University and to learn about industry needs. Most industry people are very positive towards working with this University (32285).

Business/Industry and General Public: ‘Least Satisfying’ (n = 9)
Responses about least satisfying relationships with external stakeholders centered on a lack of understanding of the work of the research services office, resulting in participants fielding inquiries not relevant to their work, and/or participants having little opportunity for ‘meaningful’ or ‘fulfilling’ interaction (32270).

DEST (DIISRTE): ‘Most Satisfying’ (n = 4)
The professional nature of the relationship with government regulators was seen as a positive, particularly given that external parties such as DEST (now DIISRTE) were, in the words of one participant, prepared to ‘…accept the need for processes…’ (32228), thereby alleviating possible areas of friction for participants.

DEST (DIISRTE): ‘Least Satisfying’ (n = 11)
There were a variety of responses in this category centered on the bureaucratic nature of DEST (DIISRTE) and the lack of interpersonal contact in particular, with one participant describing it as a ‘…standard hierarchical relationship…’ (32114). Responses included issues with the: perceived lack of understanding of the university context by DEST staff; constant changing of guidelines; lack of feedback mechanisms to improve processes; inconsistency in policy application; high staff turnover; plus, difficulties participants had in sourcing the ‘right’ answer in a timely manner. Some examples include:

I work on a daily basis with Specifications from DEST which are poorly designed but have no direct opportunity to offer suggestions for improvements (32164).
I am least satisfied with working with DEST. It can be difficult to obtain correct information and speak to the relevant person. The waiting time for answers can be drawn out (32205).

A small number of these responses also indicated the flow-on effects of government policies and information requirements on the RMA/academic researcher workplace relationship:

DEST (and other external agencies) because they make decisions and assumptions often without feedback or consultation with us that intimately affect the way we work and the relationships we rely on to make things work (32200).

Compliance relationships between DEST and academics – if there are no solid reasons for the compliance measure it is difficult to justify the effort (for example: Australian Bureau of Statistics Surveys and Research and Research Training Management Reports) (31016).

**Working Relationships in General: Positive (n = 41)**

Almost two-thirds of participants in this response category indicated that all of their working relationships were satisfactory, or at the very least, none were ‘least satisfactory’. Just under one-fifth indicated they gained the most satisfaction out of working relationships that were positive and based on mutual respect and cooperation. For one participant this meant being part of ‘win/win’ situations, for another it was when they could act as a ‘positive-bridge’ between the various stakeholder groups. The remaining responses included: enjoying working with interesting people with interesting ideas; learning new things from others; or, being able to make a positive difference to outcomes by providing support to others. Two examples are as follows:

The most satisfying relationships are with the people who want advice or help due to the positive attitude they bring to the interaction. The next most satisfying are the people who initially do not want help or advice but later come to appreciate the benefits and acknowledge such (32244).

…cannot differentiate – all are part of the process – working with early career researchers is fun but frustrating and that can be said about the lot (32295).
Working Relationships in General: Negative \( (n = 13) \)

Most of the responses for this item were about instances of relationship breakdowns or where there was a lack of cooperation between the participant and staff from other stakeholder groups, including conflicts arising from non-compliance with research policies/regulations. Problems with dealing with difficult staff members, across the board were also mentioned. Some examples that were provided include:

The least satisfying working relationships are those where despite our best efforts the relationships between researchers and funding agencies and other university administration sections break down and funding has to be returned or not received at all (32124).

Working with those people who do not understand, or will not try to understand, the constraints that surround this type of work (32224).

Functional Aspects of Role: 'Most Satisfying' \( (n = 22) \)

The strongest response under this category involved half of the participants who indicated that the most satisfying aspect of their work was in facilitating research. Three of the responses were about participants being part of the research endeavour or being able to contribute to the research process, whilst being recognised for their value-adding input. The remainder indicated a range of issues, including that they: enjoyed the problem solving aspects of their work; liked working with researchers on funding applications (and sharing in any hoped-for successes); or, in terms of ethics officers, took pleasure in sharing their knowledge of ethical principles and processes with staff and research students.

Functional Aspects of Role: 'Least Satisfying' \( (n = 19) \)

Seven of the responses under this heading related to the level of ‘administrivia’ participants had to deal with, including regulatory minutiae and the more mundane reporting tasks. An example:

Administrivia. Policy on policy development, work plan development, risk plan development…I could spend my whole day simply responding to administrative requirements to develop guidelines or responses to externally imposed agendas which make little or no contribution to the effectiveness of core business of the university – teaching and research (32059).

Working with tasks outside their area of expertise or interest was also a source of frustration for several participants, as was working with overworked people, or participants being overworked themselves. For instance:
Not being able to always give the level of service I want because of too many other things to do (32277).

Also, ‘…being the person who has to say “no” a lot…’ (31207), was an issue raised by some as an unsatisfying aspect of their jobs, as was having to work with people who did not understand the regulatory constraints participants were working with. The issue of participants having to say ‘no’ to academic researchers is returned to in the next section.

Having ‘set the scene’ in this section through the presentation of a range of surveyed material regarding participants workplace relationships, the following section draws on participant interviews in which they were asked to describe typical workplace interactions with academics and research students.

**ILLUSTRATIONS OF WORKPLACE INTERACTIONS**

As indicated in Table 7.1, the study’s 37 interviewees were asked to provide examples of typical workplace interactions occurring between themselves and academic researchers and research students (in that order). Each telephone interview was transcribed and then entered into QSR.NVivo 8, with responses initially coded by interview question and subsequently analysed for common themes. The findings are presented in the next two subsections.

**Typical Interactions with Academic Researchers**

The contents of these interviews have been grouped around three themes, namely: ‘Relationship Spectrum’, ‘Interconnectivity’, and ‘Researchers’ Recognition of the RMA Role’.

*Relationship Spectrum*

A number of the interview responses indicated that the participants perceived a spectrum of power relationships with academics ranging from hierarchical – ‘Because they have a PhD after their name – any thought they have is superior to mine…’ (1101), to cooperative – ‘I think we are held in quite high esteem, so people will come to us when they are stuck… (1232)’. In addition, some interviewees described the interaction in the terms of a customer service relationship, with academics referred to as their clients. Several participants indicated a difference in how academics responded to them at an organisational or group level, as opposed to interactions at an individual level. The following excerpt provides a pertinent example:

…it’s funny we hear from senior management…that we got three complaints for every compliment about our office but when we deal with staff one-on-one when we go out to
(the faculties) we get emails back saying “Thank you, you were really, really helpful” and “It would have been much harder without you” and all the rest of it, so the interactions we have are generally positive …but that is not what we hear from other sources… (1224).

Some participants with PhDs and/or research experience indicate better working relationships with academics than do their non-HDR qualified peers, whilst others have found their PhD qualification made no difference to the interactions, with their advice ignored and contribution downplayed. The following quotation provides an illustration of the aforementioned hierarchical nature of some of the researcher/RMA interactions as has been highlighted in other findings in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. This excerpt is of particular interest given the example refers to an RMA staff member who is PhD-qualified with research experience and track record:

Well I will just give the example of (my staff member)...whose previous job was as an academic, s/he has a PhD and s/he previously held (competitive) grants, s/he also spent time (previous executive roles outside university sector) and s/he can comment on grants and comment on whether the budget works…but if s/he tries to give advice about improving the grant application itself, saying this or doing that – anything about the methodology s/he is certainly…I say basically most of the time not listened to. The (advice given) is ignored and sometimes the comment is “Well, that is not your business” sort of thing. So I think that is a real problem where you have examples of people who do have expertise and are for that reason their advice is not adhered to. One of the other things that I do find from a personal point of view, is I have had [X] years in higher education, I would have to say, if you give me any scenario, I would have dealt with it at some stage…and again I come up with suggestions and solutions and methods of doing things and again often that advice is not seen as relevant because I am a general staff member…we are still seen by and large as glorified office girls, we use the word ‘girls’ advisedly, and we are there to do the typing and the photocopying but any sort of recognition that this is actually my expertise is definitely not there (1223).

In a related theme, this next excerpt is also about the perceived and actual ‘us and them’ culture but it is written from the point of view of the need to build bridges across the two groups. This example also highlights the importance of RMA having advanced communication and negotiation skills, in order to successfully perform their roles as described by the questionnaire participants later in this chapter and in Chapters 5 and 6.

…I still think there is a… ‘them and us’ perception and that perception is equal on both sides, so…in communication there is often different agendas, I think there is one from an
academic’s end and there is one from a research administrator’s or manager’s end as well. So in many ways I think communication between both parties, there is a real need for negotiation and often compromise because I think there are two …very different focuses and agendas on what each party is trying to achieve. So in many ways…successful relationships with academic staff members in my own experience have only been built up over time. I remember when I first started in this role and trying to talk to some academic staff members about [X] and there was some really, really difficult conversations whereas they might not have fully understood what it was about so they just thought it was restrictive and that it was stopping research from happening and it was stopping them from… doing what they want to do. Now over time I think that firstly their understanding of [X] has changed but I think a large part of that is being able to develop a relationship with these people and then developing some trust in that relationship that I am not about to try and restrict their research or anything that they do. All I am trying to do is put resources and systems and processes in place which is actually going to help the business side of it which will then actually if anything free them up so they can actually go and do the research but I still believe there is a…‘them and us’ type perception or attitude, which is a shame (1115).

This next example illustrates a ‘sea-change’ between a previously ‘us and them’ culture, to a more cooperative/constructive approach between the research services office and researchers:

Well I have noticed a big change …when I started [X] years ago, it was quite aggressive … quite demanding …we could never do anything right … I suppose it was they saw particularly the research ethics and compliance …as a hindrance to…what they needed to get done … but over the last few years we have made a lot of effort to … assist …to find out what their needs are and then to come up with processes to, we still have to meet our obligations as an institution, but how we go about doing it is really up to us and we want to do it in a way that is…more beneficial to the researchers rather than just an administrative nightmare … so I think since we have put those changes in place they have been a lot more positive towards us …they actually give us a lot of good feedback……rather than just being really aggressive and negative… they (now) tend to … utilise us as a service, rather than just submitting a form, they actually ring us up and ask us for advice… so I think that …demonstrates that they trust us and that they are willing to utilise our knowledge and experience…(1202).
On the subject of interpersonal communication between RMA and researchers, a number of interviewees described three areas of importance to them in their work, this being the need to: build their organisational networks; provide good quality support services; and, listen and respond appropriately to academic feedback. A heightened focus on the need for advanced communication and negotiation skills in the carrying out of RMA activity is also evident in the number of participants who listed it as recommended professional development requirement in their work, as detailed in Chapter 5. Several interviewees indicated the need to find ways of giving ‘negative’ advice or saying no in a way that was helpful, particularly by concentrating on providing alternative ways or suggestions on how to turn something around. For example:

… I think that the academics often do not want to hear ‘no’. One of the things that I have done in my coaching with my staff is to think of these people and what they do for a living, they are equivalent to someone who swims up a pool everyday looking at the black line, they do not want to hear ‘no’ from you, you are just getting in their way. So if you do have to say ‘no’ think of a way of saying it in which you are helping them… I think we have got a reasonable reputation for being able to do that here… rather than being confrontational and just say “No you cannot do that”… (1126).

A common sentiment expressed by interviewees was the wish for academics to appreciate that RMA were the ‘meat in the sandwich’, in that they were undertaking work or providing advice or requesting information that was designed or related to ensuring compliance with the regulatory environment, and were not trying to be problematic or difficult to researchers who were affected by this activity or requests. For example:

Mostly positive I would say, the only negatives that I would ever have in my correspondence would be those who do not like being made to ‘jump through the relevant hoops’ (laughter) and then… its … quite difficult for us to put across that it’s not personal, we understand they are very… well-established, world-renowned researcher in their field but they still have to do these three things in order to meet criteria, so that is quite hard to get across sometimes … (1205).

The importance of using humour in interpersonal exchanges with academics was a common refrain in the interviews (hence the decision to include bracketed references indicating moments of laughter in the interviews in the transcribed quotations of participants throughout this thesis), with a sense of humour raised by a number of questionnaire participants as being an essential personal characteristic of individuals working in this area (as reported in Chapter 5). Apart from humour, the need to build trust between RMA and researchers, plus the effects of the
surrounding organisational culture on these working relationships, were also raised. In the words of one participant:

Well I have been here long enough now that most of the academics I deal with regularly know me well enough to … make a joke somewhere along the way I suppose, so that would be the most common thing that someone would email or telephone or drop in (I wish they would not drop in but they do!) and start off with some joke and then say “Oh [X] you will not believe what I am going to ask you to do today” sort of thing… that is a fairly typical interaction we get a lot of. Again I do not know if (this university) is unusual in this but we have generally a very good relationship with virtually the entire research community. There are a few people who bad-mouth us around the place but there are very, very few of them and I would suspect that many of their colleagues would look at them like: “Well I am sorry, but you are just not asking the right questions” or whatever. You know I think we are held in quite high esteem and so people will come to us when they are stuck, we are trying very hard at the moment to have a considered sort of education approach of trying to get people to talk to us before there is a problem, rather than asking us to sort something out by writing a long complicated letter to the ARC, why don’t we talk about it before it blows up. And we are slowly getting that message through…but again it comes back to this service level thing, if we promised then we have got to be able to deliver it, and if we really cannot then we have got to stop promising it (1232).

Similarly, the following quotation illustrates how one PhD-qualified participant works through the issue of gaining the trust of academic researchers and how she determines the value-adding or contributive potential of her input:

There is often a starting level of suspicion when you seek to help academics because even when you do have a PhD they do not necessarily see you as being someone who knows anything about what they are doing. So the question that I think they ask themselves is what possible value could this person add to what I am doing? So what I try to do when I interact with academics is quickly establish for them and for me where I can add value. Now if I do not think that I can add value then I will back off, leave them to it or direct them to somebody else I think that can help…Providing that you can establish that you can help them and that you are not trying to step into their territory and that you are going to be pleasant about it, then mostly the interactions are very pleasant. I find personally, and the people in my office find, that our interactions with academics are very nice and very pleasant. Not to say that there are not a few who are not (laughter)… (1227).
**Interconnectivity**

Connections between the work of researchers and the work of participants are evident throughout the study’s findings, in particular, in Chapter 6 where the interconnectivity between researchers and RMA work was revealed as a dominant response category in relation to participant responses regarding their accountabilities and performance expectations. The following examples illustrate when positive connection is or is not occurring.

Ok, typical examples would be the submission of an application where I will then go through and make comments on eligibility compliance about an application and mechanism for the academic to strengthen the application, so generally when we do that we try and do it in a two-day turnaround and then give them an explicit dot point list of: things that have to be fixed; things that could be fixed; and things that you make recommendations on, and then they would resubmit that application fixed. Another kind of thing would be asking for advice if conflict has occurred where you have two people on a grant and they want to try and get to the bottom of some conflict, or find out their options if conflict is occurring, there is quite a lot of that sort of advice going on. …advising on budgets is a big thing, people do not seem to know about how much anything costs. Legal requirements – people do not understand what a contract is and what it actually binds them to, so I interact quite often between the academics and the solicitors, advising on what is relevant and what is not relevant… (1234).

…this morning a researcher sent me an email to say that they…want to engage in this new research project so I contacted them and said…could you please provide me with the copy of the proposal, I need to go through it to make sure the proper risk management has been undertaken and their question is “Why do you need to know that?” “I will give it to you when I have signed off on the contract”. They do not provide you with that information so you know in that particular scenario it’s … I am ‘interfering’ and I am ‘infringing’ on their rights to carry on their research independently by asking these questions. But on another day of the week (for example) yesterday, I got an inquiry from a researcher who had found a new foundation and they had drafted up a proposal and wanted me to have a look at it. I gave them feedback about it and they came back saying: “Wow, that is really useful feedback and I am really grateful that you could get back to me so quickly and I have been able to get the benefit of your advice on preparing and forwarding this off to the foundation”... and that would not necessarily be a different researcher (laughter). So… sometimes the relationship is really good and sometimes the relationship is really bad (laughter)... (1207).
A major area of potential ‘disconnection’ between researchers and RMA from the perspective of participants both in these interview findings and the data reported in earlier chapters, is in the area of academic resistance or assistance with compliance matters which are administered by participants. Compliance-related activities are a key area of workplace interaction between these two staffing groups, highlighting the interconnectedness of RMA activity with that of the academic researcher and the relative importance of the relationship dynamic to a productive work outcome for both participants. The following excerpt provides an insight into ‘compliance-resistant’ and ‘compliance-friendly’ behaviours of researchers within the same institution:

Well typical interactions would probably be academics ringing up asking to be able to get their stuff in late, to bypass us…trying to avoid the red tape. There is also the other typical interaction …” I need help, I need you to get this fixed now”, or “…I have got this problem … I cannot use this database so I cannot submit my application”, or “I … need to get this contract done and I think I may have made a mistake, I have signed this contract myself… can you dig me out of this hole?” To…people who ring up, and this happens a lot, people who ring up and say “I need to know am I eligible for this, can I do this?” “Can you help me with my budget” “…can you have a look at my application and see if you think I am on the right track?” So, yeah it’s the whole gamut from avoidance and trying to get around us and not seeing us as useful to…wanting us to make problems go away and fix things up and being appreciative (1220).

Researchers’ Recognition of the RMA Role

Interviewees indicated that researchers tended to fall into one of two categories when it came to their dealings with research service offices – either they avoided such offices and treated them as no more than a ‘mailbox’, or research service offices were seen as ‘value-adding’ to the research process and were treated accordingly. In turn, the interactions between researcher and RMA were influenced either negatively or positively depending on which of these two perspectives the academic researcher held (an attitude which may or may not have been supported or fostered by the relevant organisational culture or university management, as previously raised in Chapter 6 in the findings on participants performance and accountability expectations).

The following quotation indicates the varying approaches taken by academic researchers in the same institution towards a research services office from the perspective of the interviewee. It highlights the effect of differing levels of academic research engagement with RMA and RMA
work activity, thereby demonstrating an interaction between the levels of academic engagement and levels of RMA facilitative/contributive potential.

…I think you get people essentially in two groups – you have got those who will come to you because they have a specific problem – with their accounting, or their projects are delayed or some other issue and they want you to help fix it, and then there is the group who actually consult you in advance of doing something, whether it be a grant application, or discussion of ethics, or clarification of the university’s position on some matter. Oh maybe there is a third group, there is a very small group who will talk about issues such as: “Where is the university heading in terms of research?” “What does the (senior research executive) think?” “What do you think?” “What should we be doing?” They are a much more strategically focused lot. In the particular context of academics who are submitting grant applications, they can vary between those that are just putting it in through the research office because that is what they are told is meant to happen and they do not really care if you give much feedback – that is the way it feels as they do not seem to take much account of what you tell them anyway. Then there are others who just seem to be eternally grateful for the fact that you have actually read the thing the whole way through and you have actually provided them with some constructive comments (1231).

In short, these findings identify that RMA perceive a close relationship between the effectiveness of their contribution, particularly in facilitating an activity, situation or outcome, and the degree of operating freedom offered or enabled by the researcher(s) involved in the interaction. This relationship dynamic is further explored in a conceptual model of the RMA/Academic Researcher working relationship as devised through this research and presented in Chapter 9.

**Typical Interactions with Research Students**

A number of the study’s interviewees had little or no contact with research students – especially those in the staffing subgroups of: ‘RMA (Grants/ Finance)’; ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’; ‘RMA (Planning/Quality/RQF/Projects)’; or ‘RMA (Contracts/External Relations/Research Development)’. A number of ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’ also indicated that they had no interaction with research students because students came under a graduate services area of responsibility, which was organisationally at arms-length to the Research Service office. However, interviewees from the staffing subgroup ‘RMA (Ethics)’ talked warmly of their interactions with students, indicating they mostly enjoyed working with them. However, there was a perception that interviewees took on more of a mentoring role in some cases, particularly
in some disciplinary areas as opposed to others, resulting at times in their functions/interactions crossing over into the ‘supervisory domain’. Others noted that the type and level of interaction in the area of ethics and ethics compliance between research students and themselves was reflective of the different practices of the student’s supervisor(s). For example:

…I am by no means commenting on the quality of the supervision at (current university) or other places I have worked but I have noticed that, particularly for some disciplinary areas, students end up…they are so desperate for advice or a chance to talk through issues that you in effect become by proxy a supervisor. So…students want to talk through the issues or talk about alternatives or strategies or what other people are doing…and sometimes outside of your area of expertise, just because you are a person who they can interact with. I think that I would have to say that 95 or 90 per cent of my interactions with research students are basically positive and it’s very much a … I see you as a professional; I want to get advice and talk through these issues. I think that going back to what I was saying before that it’s potentially a challenge for all of us though that we cannot really afford to be …taking on what a supervisor should be doing (1235).

…quite often the students’ act independently which is good and I encourage PhD students and honours students to ring up, we also hold seminars for them too in terms of ethics, particularly animal ethics. So there is a certain amount of interaction and you get a variable amount if interaction, somebody might have gone through using animals… and they will do their PhD in three and a half years maybe four and you never had any interactions with them. Whereas some of the PhD students you have a tremendous amount of interaction, and that would reflect maybe on the encouragement by their supervisor who they interact more with – that he does not do all the talking to the people who are administrating, that they get a chance do that and I think that it is great that they get exposed to that. So it probably comes down to the supervisor’s attitude and just occasionally you get supervisors who completely divest all their supervisory responsibilities so you end up doing a hell of a lot (laughter) so it depends a bit on the individual (1112).

In a related vein, some participants referred to the ‘go-between’ role they played, particularly in instances of a breakdown in the Supervisor/Research Student relationship:

Well I guess in terms of the research office here we play very much from what I see as a go-between role…we provide a buffer and an advocate for students and probably vice versa between a supervisor and the student because they are very close relationships and
there can be problems both ways and we provide lots of advice and support for students... I
would say one of the things we do mainly is …counselling and advising on problems with
supervisors and also at the end of the process unfortunately we do have some problems
with examinations, with things going wrong with the examination process, the students
have to re-write and we provide a lot of support through that process which can be, as you
can imagine, fairly traumatic for students after all that work and then they get bounced and
we work through that... (1223).

I think one of the most problematic areas of administration of research students is dealing
with supervisors and the supervisor/student relationship…a lot of the problems that come
up arise because of inadequate communications, sometimes almost non-existent
communication between supervisor and student and I would think that the question, a very
relevant question is what our role, what the research office’s role is in trying to improve
that…and the answer I suppose is to suggest and to get approved by the university research
degrees committee various initiatives to try to do something… (such as) cultural change
initiatives, initiatives aimed in improving the knowledge base of researchers, of
supervisors and indeed of students… (1111).

Interviewees from the staffing subgroup ‘RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)’ reported
enjoying their interactions with research students, and saw them as mainly pleasant interactions
which verged at times to one of obedience by the student towards the participant. In such
instances interviewees indicated awareness, for the most part, of the power differential involved
between RMA staff and research students as evidenced in their responses. The following
excerpts highlight this difference in authority levels, juxtaposed against power differentials
between participants and academic researchers:

…academic researchers are much more likely to just have very simple questions and quite
often they are sitting there when they call me with the research student with them. So they
may need sort of mentoring or helping, that is one group. The other group just wants to
complain about you know: “Your bloody online submission system stinks and who can I
complain to about it”; or “What is the right dose rate for this?” because they are too lazy to
look it up. Research students, I much prefer the interactions with them because… some of
the questions appear to be more naïve but in fact they have given a lot of thought to it and
they are happy to discuss it in greater detail and they care and are willing… So I love my
interactions with students generally…they are always happy to receive help … they do not
whinge so much. I do not know what happens to them to turn into whingers… (1222).
…research students are slightly different I think because they are research trainees. I think they see themselves often as pretty much on the lowest rung of the ladder in the university and if someone from the research office contacts them they see them as part of the university infrastructure so they are much more mindful of the advice that they are receiving and much more obedient I suppose (laughter). They respond much faster if you ask them for something, it’s sort of “Oh yes of course!” and they give you the information fairly quickly. It is partly their level of knowledge and experience as well that they often have not had research projects before or so anything you tell them is accepted as gospel (laughter). You know you are very much an authority in their eyes, so they are willing to accept advice and are quite cooperative in providing information when it’s needed and things like that…. so I think in terms of the power thing academics are more powerful than the research office staff member but a research office staff member is more powerful than a research student (1207).

Conversely, a participant in describing a less educative relationship dynamic between themselves and research students indicated they had similar interactions with research academics as they did with research students:

Ok, the students, it’s really the same kind of stuff, exactly the same … you know: “My supervisor will not see me”, “I cannot get anything done with my work”, “…I am having a blue about something or other or we do not seem to be able to work out”, “I cannot get access to resources”. I think for students here, because there is not clarity or parity in accessing this information at schools so there is often things about that … “I am having trouble writing is there anything I can do to help that” … or things around examinations and that sort of stuff. We do not really tend to talk to them very much as a group except at workshops sometimes they go along to conferences and things like that and we just do updates on policies and things that might be affecting them. I think it would be fairly similar to the kind of interactions you have with supervisors actually (1210).

The RMA/Research Student working relationship was also described by one participant in terms of providing pastoral care in her interactions with research students:

…well I think that we are a point of call for pastoral care but also the day-to-day administration of their degrees, scholarships, etc. So it can vary from being a coach: “You can do it, go on!” to… if they have not put their form in or something and they are upset so you are there and you are with the box of tissues… or it could be they are quite angry
about something and you need to basically calm them down. So…depending on where they are and depending on the structure…if there is no academic support for them – if there is not an academic who cares for them then really the research manager will take on that role. I remember when I was at (former university) I still get students who passed their PhDs …and they will see me in the street and grab me and say thanks for helping me through, so they will always remember you which is quite nice… (1206).

Finally, one participant talked about her work in assisting research students in relation to Intellectual Property and authorship matters:

…mostly what I deal with research students about is intellectual property and they are almost always concerned that they will be ripped off by either the university or the industry partner or sometimes their supervisor and what I usually do is explain how intellectual property works and what they can expect and how they can protect themselves. One of the main issues that tends to arise both with research students and with academics generally …relates to authorship…people getting upset about ‘other people’… stealing their work and often what they are doing is not a breach of copyright or anything like that it’s the acknowledgement of another person’s assistance or contribution to a particular paper and once you explain it’s not about a right it’s about being polite to people mostly the situation calms down fairly quickly... (1229).

The evidence above suggests that the communication between doctoral students and RMA is rich and varied; however, apart from this thesis, there is little work that explores the relationship between RMA and research students, or indeed, any group of students. Jackson and Kile (2004) set out to investigate whether or not a nexus exists between the work of university administrators and student outcomes in the USA and found the field to be ‘nascent’. This was also the author’s experience to this point in time, with some notable exceptions being the work of Graham (2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2013), Pitman (2000) and Small (2008). This is clearly an area in need of in-depth research.

Drawing on the findings from this current study, participants who were ‘RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)’ indicated a strong dedication to the welfare and progress of the HDR students. The next step would be to identify more closely the parameters of this input over the period of candidature and its impact on outcomes, especially in relation to promoting candidate progress, continuation and completion. Research attention could also be drawn to the role of RMA in the pastoral care of research students; research student concerns surrounding Intellectual Property and publication authorship as it relates to their research; perceived
differences in how academic researchers and research students interact with RMA; and most pertinently (in the current and much changed environment), role boundary issues.

WORKPLACE COMMUNICATIONS

At this point attention will turn from relationships with stakeholders to communication with them (see questionnaire items 40-42 in Table 7.1). This section begins with typical modes of communication.

Typical Communication Mode

Table 7.8 presents participants’ typical modes of communication, with nine key stakeholder groups (Q40) ranked in order of majority response frequency; the percentages of which were derived using the descriptive statistics function in SPSS. As shown, just under half of the 194 questionnaire participants indicated that they had no form of communication with members of the general public. At the other end of the spectrum, almost all participants indicated they communicated with academic, and non-academic staff external to their work area; and with all participants indicating that they communicated with staff within their work area. Roughly a third of the participants reported no communication with external stakeholders, such as funding agencies; DEST (now DIISRTE), and business/industry. All of which support earlier findings of stakeholder ‘connectivity’ to participants, presented under the previous section on workplace relationships.

Table 7.8 Typical Modes of Communication with Key Stakeholders by Ranked Majority of Responses (n = 194)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Communication Mode</th>
<th>No Interaction n (%)</th>
<th>Email 1 (%)</th>
<th>Telephone 2 (%)</th>
<th>Face-to-Face 3 (%)</th>
<th>Writing 4 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research students</td>
<td></td>
<td>58 (30%)</td>
<td>1 (67%)</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td>3 (48%)</td>
<td>4 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (95%)</td>
<td>2 (85%)</td>
<td>3 (73%)</td>
<td>4 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff within work area</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (81%)</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
<td>1 (97%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-academic staff external to work area</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (97%)</td>
<td>2 (85%)</td>
<td>3 (53%)</td>
<td>4 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government funding agencies</td>
<td></td>
<td>53 (27%)</td>
<td>1 (69%)</td>
<td>2 (56%)</td>
<td>4 (16%)</td>
<td>3 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Government funding agencies</td>
<td></td>
<td>66 (34%)</td>
<td>1 (61%)</td>
<td>2 (49%)</td>
<td>4 (12%)</td>
<td>3 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEST (DIISRTE)</td>
<td></td>
<td>60 (31%)</td>
<td>1 (62%)</td>
<td>2 (41%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/Industry</td>
<td></td>
<td>57 (29%)</td>
<td>1 (64%)</td>
<td>2 (51%)</td>
<td>4 (19%)</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Public</td>
<td></td>
<td>85 (44%)</td>
<td>2 (38%)</td>
<td>1 (49%)</td>
<td>3 (22%)</td>
<td>4 (19%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In viewing the ranked order of modes of communication across stakeholders (see Table 7.8), there appear to be four broad findings which are presented as 1–4 below.

1. For staff within the participant’s work area, the communication mode order is: face-to-face; email; telephone; and then writing. This pattern reflects not only the situational logistics for most participants (putting aside multiple-campus dynamics), but also that a high face-to-face communication component may play a large part in the earlier reported findings on higher levels of positive relationships between participants and staff within their work area.

2. For research students, academics and non-academic staff external to participants work areas, the majority ordering of the typical communication mode was: email; telephone; face-to-face; and then writing. This patterning indicates the ‘one-step removed’ nature of these groups from participants in an organisational sense, but most interestingly there appears a relatively high face-to-face component of communication with academics compared to the other two stakeholder groups. Again, the stronger face-to-face component may be a factor in higher participant satisfaction with workplace relations with academics, as reported in the previous section.

3. The majority ordering of email, telephone, writing and then face-to-face, occurred for all external stakeholders with the exception of the general public. The higher ordering (and in the main, larger response frequencies) of the writing mode is indicative of the more formal working relationships between participants and these stakeholder groups, with the relatively low frequency of face-to-face communication perhaps adding weight to participants earlier comments regarding the depersonalized nature of their working relationships with DEST (DIISRTE), for example.

4. Finally, the ‘general public’ reports as the only stakeholder where email was not seen by participants as being a primary mode of communication as it is with all other stakeholder groups. Participants indicated that a large component of these interactions occur when participants are fielding telephone inquiries from the public.

Communication Mode: ‘Most and Least Preferred’

Questionnaire participants were asked to indicate their most and least preferred modes of communication (see Q41-42 listed in Table 7.1), and to explain their choices since 163 (84 per cent of total participants) provided a response to both items. The intensity of responses received for each stakeholder group, and the proportion of those responses which indicated what communication mode was the most or least satisfying for participants, is indicated in Figure 7.9. The bars on the graph are presented by highest to lowest most preferred communication mode. More than one communication mode may have been nominated by participants.
As shown in Figure 7.9, email was by far the most preferred form of communication, with writing being the least preferred. Response categories emerging through text analysis with QSR.NVivo 8 illustrate a range of perspectives on the four communication modes, the findings of which are now presented. An additional response category: ‘Depends on the Situation’, is included in the following analyses. Occurrence (total count of ‘most preferred’ and of ‘least preferred’) of mention is included in brackets.

**Figure 7.9** Most and Least Preferred Communication Mode (n = 163)

**Email** (n = 94 ‘most preferred’, n = 30 ‘least preferred’)

The archival features of email were a strong selling point for just under half of the 94 participants who indicated a preference for this mode with emails being used as formal records of agreements made or advice given, and acting as follow-up prompts and/or written confirmation. The ‘instantaneous’ speed of this communication mode was the next preferred feature by 40 per cent of participants to this category. The asynchronous nature of email communication was also found to be attractive to 20 participants, providing flexibility, convenience and for some, accessibility outside office hours or the office itself. It also meant that participants were not ‘put on the spot’ in terms of answering a question that they were not sure of, allowing them to respond when they were confident of their response. In addition, their work flow was not disrupted in the same way it would be if the participant was unexpectedly called or visited in their workplace.
The remaining positive responses indicated that this form of communication was effective for sending out routine communications, particularly large mail-outs, and for embedding internet references or attaching other forms of documentation, such as guidelines or policy references for example.

Conversely, 30 participants indicated email was not a preferred communication mode for a range of reasons, including that it was: open to misuse with senders including unnecessary addressees in their emails for example; open to misinterpretation or miscommunication because of message brevity and/or tone; and/or overused, with a number of participants indicating they could no longer keep up with the sheer volume of email traffic and were, therefore, missing important information as a consequence. For the latter point, the instantaneous nature of email also meant that they were sent with expectations of immediate follow-up by the sender, thereby putting unwanted pressure on recipients. The ‘impersonal’ nature of email was also raised as a concern for a small number of participants.

**Face-to-Face (n = 46 ‘most preferred’, n = 19 ‘least preferred’)***

Face-to-face was a preferred mode of communication for 46 participants. More than half of these participants liked the personal contact aspects of this mode, particularly for relationship building or networking, or for gaining access to non-verbal cues so they could measure the efficacy of the communication process. A similar number reported the effectiveness of this mode, particularly given its synchronous nature, with participants preferring this mode for complex problem solving or for imparting information of a delicate or sensitive nature. For the 19 participants who indicated they did not prefer this mode, most of these found face-to-face interaction (predominantly in the form of meetings or unexpected ‘drop-ins’ to the office) to be time-consuming, inefficient or disruptive.

**Telephone (n = 21 ‘most preferred’, n = 50 ‘least preferred’)***

Telephones were a preferred form of communication for 21 participants, mostly because of the ‘real time interactive’ nature of this mode. In other words, callers could exchange information with other parties quickly, with the option of addressing follow-up questions or reaching mutual understanding through real-time dialogue leading to less ambiguity of meaning. This communication mode was preferred, in particular, for any exchange that required a quick response, such as a simple request for information.

However, of the 50 responses indicating telephones to be the least preferred communication mode, almost half referred to the potential for miscommunication given the lack of access to non-verbal cues and/or in instances of hearing difficulties or thick vocal accents. The lack of
documentation was a key issue, as was the understandably annoying (and inefficient) nature of telephone/voicemail tag. A further one-fifth of participants in this category found telephone calls to be disruptive to their workflow unless they were pre-arranged. A similar number of participants indicated concern with the immediacy of telephone communication, as instant responses were demanded in this mode which did not allow participants time to consider or plan their responses.

**Writing** ($n = 8$ ‘most preferred’, $n = 66$ ‘least preferred’)  
Whilst writing was clearly not a preferred form of communication given the small response to this category, there was recognition by participants of the appropriateness of this mode for legal documentation and other forms of formal writing. Of the 66 participants who indicated writing was not a preferred form of communication, most were concerned with the slowness of this mode. This mode was reported to be slow and inefficient because of the time it took to script and then obtain signatures as required, and then send the resultant correspondence by ‘snail mail’. Letters were seen as a communication form that was given a lower priority by the receiver, which translated into slower response rates. The formal nature of this communication mode reduced its suitability for a number of participants, assuming another mode sufficed depending on the original purpose of the communication itself.

To conclude this section, there are some comments from participants that neatly sum up the main issues about choice of mode, and also signify the complexity of roles, issues and identity in the workplace alongside the nature of electronic versus face-to-face communication.

Most preferred is email as it is quick and is also a permanent record (which is easily retrieved) of formal or informal discussions. Prefer telephone to face-to-face in a situation which may require assertiveness but prefer face-to-face if it’s a complicated issue to discuss (32245).

Depends on what you are trying to achieve: email for ‘on the record’ items; face-to-face for off the record or impact communication; telephone for immediate responses or solutions (31272).

Email, has been referred to as a ‘lean medium’ whilst its counterpart, face-to-face, is a ‘rich medium’, according to Daft and Lengel’s Media Richness Theory (Daft and Lengel, 1984, as cited in Rocheleau, 2002). This is, in part, about email usage being restricted to the ‘…transmission of facts and details…’, whereas face-to-face communication is preferred when

One participant in the study cautioned that any communication mode ‘...could be inappropriate at certain points in the discussion process…’ (32147), thereby highlighting the need to utilise communication modes appropriately depending, in the words of another participant, on ‘…time constraints, purpose of communication, as well as complexity of issues…’ (32276).

Rocheleau (2002) wrote of the ubiquity of email in the workplace, with employees increasingly using email strategically to document actions and agreements in the form of a digital record; this being a feature not available in face-to-face and telephone conversations (assuming no audio recordings were made). However, he cautioned that individuals and organisations may not fully appreciate the legal implications of ‘unprotected digital records’, citing a legal case in which it was found that the employee did not have the ‘…refuge of deniability or disagreement over what has been said [via email] that is available in normal face-to-face or phone communications…’ (Rocheleau, 2002, p. 92). It is not clear from this study whether or not participants were aware of the potential legal ramifications of email.

McNay (2005, p. 41) posed a question to the readers of his article on higher education communities, as to whether or not email usage has ‘...enhanced commitment and identification, or created a sense of separation and distance...’ for staff in universities. Such a question has relevance here and further research is necessary to adequately address it; noting, in particular, the lack of research on the usage and impact of email communication (and other electronic formats) in public organisations, as indicated by Rocheleau (2002).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

What is most apparent from these findings is that RMA work does not happen in isolation from other stakeholders, and that the most mentioned group are academic researchers. Overall, participants indicated they were most satisfied in those working relationships with stakeholders in which they felt valued, supported, enabled and empowered to be productive in the performance of their roles. Problems arose when the working relationships broke down or when the participant was hindered in their role function through such things as an academic’s non-compliance with various regulatory or policy frameworks, or when their input was dismissed, diminished or stymied.
The extended examples given of typical academic researcher/RMA workplace interactions presented in this chapter have highlighted a number of the key issues perceived by RMA, including:

- the changing nature of research support;
- the need to redefine the ‘Academic/Administrative’ working relationship from ‘us and them’, to one of recognised complementarity of skills and expertise;
- the recognition that there are different levels of research support/facilitation provided by RMA;
- that the level of academic engagement can hamper or assist the contributive potential of RMA;
- that there is a difference between how the RMA/Researcher workplace relationship is played out at the individual level versus at the collective level;
- that when a participant holds a PhD qualification this may or may not (given mixed participant responses in this study) lead to better workplace relationships with academic staff, noting the implication of possible organisational cultural effects; and
- that there are substantial effects on the RMA operating environment depending on whether or not the academic researchers are ‘compliant friendly’ or ‘compliant resistant’.

These issues will be revisited in the final chapter. In turn the illustrations by examples of RMA/research student working relationships from the perspective of those interviewed set the scene for potential areas of future investigation. Further, regarding the RMA/Academic Research workplace relationship, differences in interactions between interviewees and new researchers as opposed to older researchers with ‘runs on the board’ were also identified; as were differences in the interactions experienced by interviewees from newer versus older universities, for example. However, given the mixed nature of these interactions according to interviewees further research aimed at testing workplace relationships under differing organisational (for example: Go8 versus IRU) and personnel (for example: experienced researcher versus early career researcher) characteristics would be of interest.

Whilst it is appreciated that the speed of technological innovations and the progress of communication forms in the workplace are such that the findings in this area of the inquiry are in danger of being made superfluous by such advances, they are nevertheless instructive of aspects of the workplace environment. For example, it appears from the findings on communication modes that participants want not only to act in a competent manner, but that
they also like to portray the impression of competence, given they do not like being ‘caught out’
through either not knowing an answer or giving incorrect information. Their responses
indicated a strong need to be efficient and effective in their work, ensuring audit trails and
archival retrieval of information exchanged, advice given and decisions made. It would seem
that email is the primary form of communication, with the face-to-face mode becoming a ‘time-
luxury’ for many, except for top level directors in meetings as previously mentioned. In turn,
the written form has been rendered almost obsolete by the ongoing advance of email, whilst
telephone calls must either be very quick or by appointment only (such as for example,
teleconferences).

Many of the above themes emerge in the next chapter, which focuses on preparation for a
particular high profile event – the first research assessment exercise to be launched in Australian
universities.
CHAPTER 8

ACTIVITY AND RESPONSE IN THE CONTEXT OF A MAJOR POLICY CHANGE

As argued in previous chapters, there is a need to know more about RMA as a group; who they are, what they do, and how they perceive the workplace being key to understanding RMA issues and associated impact on research within the tertiary education sector. Much of the information presented in previous chapters has described and given structure to the picture of RMA and their work in Australia. This chapter focuses on a particular event in Australian higher education – the introduction of research assessment – and extends the picture and the arguments about RMA contribution to research developed in the earlier chapters, within the specific context of policy implementation. The RQF was superseded (after a change of government at federal level) and replaced with another research assessment framework – the ERA (as previously mentioned in Chapter 1). However, this does not limit the usefulness of the data obtained in this study, given the aims described above.

The period of data collection coincided with the implementation of the ‘Research Quality Framework’ (RQF) at a very preliminary phase. From questionnaire and interview responses, the researcher was able to determine RMA knowledge and understanding of the new initiative, their degree of engagement and their perspectives on the changes, and potential impact; especially on their own work. The questions asked of the participants began with initial reactions to the policy and ended with their forecasts of possible future effects of the RQF. Participant perceptions of managing and implementing major policy change in general, along with specific reference to the RQF, are also explored in this chapter.

The findings are presented under the headings: knowledge of and initial response to the announced RQF; understanding of RQF significance; managing and implementing policy change; variations in RQF involvement; and perceptions of future RQF effects. The contents of the chapter are discussed against a timeline of RQF policy releases, policy antecedents and related ministerial announcements, as provided in Appendix K.22 The organisational structure of the chapter and associated questionnaire and interview items that are drawn on by the researcher, are presented in Table 8.1.

22 Although outside the remit of this thesis, a comprehensive discussion of the policy turning points and associated government reports and decisions leading up to the introduction of the RQF can be found in recent doctoral research about the effects of the RQF on academic occupational identity by Zelle (2012).
Table 8.1 Overview of Chapter’s Thematic Structure, Items and Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMATIC STRUCTURE</th>
<th>ITEMS AND RESPONSE RATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **KNOWLEDGE OF AND INITIAL RESPONSE TO THE RQF** | This section presents participant \((n = 188)\) responses to seven questionnaire items:  
Q53) How much do you know about the proposed RQF policy?  
Q54) What were your primary sources of information about the proposed RQF policy?  
Q55) What more information do you currently need?  
Q58) Have you had direct experience at a university of a process similar to the RQF, such as the UK’s RAE?  
Q60) How has your University responded to the proposed RQF policy implementation?  
Q61-62) What has been your level of participation in the development of your University’s/Unit’s response to the proposed RQF policy?  
Participant \((n = 37)\) responses are also presented regarding the following first-round interview item:  
Q9) When you first heard about the RQF, what was your reaction? |
| **UNDERSTANDING OF RQF SIGNIFICANCE** | This section presents participant \((n = 188)\) responses to three questionnaire items:  
Q56) In terms of your work experience, where would the RQF rate in terms of its significance when compared to other changes/reforms?  
Q57) From your perspective, if there was a more significant change than the RQF, what was it and why?  
Q59) In relation to the proposed implementation of the RQF, how much impact will it likely have on (listed items)?  
Participant \((n = 37)\) responses are also presented regarding the following first-round interview item:  
Q10) The questionnaire explored the degree to which the RQF was a significant change – from your perspective how significant is it? |
| **MANAGING AND IMPLEMENTING POLICY CHANGE** | This section presents participant \((n = 188)\) responses to four questionnaire items:  
Q63) Which of the following further resources (listed items) do you think will be necessary for your University to respond to all the dimensions of the proposed RQF?  
Q64-65) In terms of your answer (to the above question), which of the required (listed) resources are most/least likely to be provided?  
Q66) What do you think will be your biggest challenge/s in relation to the proposed implementation of the RQF?  
Participant \((n = 34)\) responses are also presented regarding three second-round interview items:  
Q2) When implementing a new policy in your workplace – what are the various steps involved in the implementation process? Does this apply to the RQF?  
Q3) When implementing change in your workplace – what have you typically found to be the most challenging part of the change process? Are the same types of challenges occurring for the RQF implementation?  
Q5) If you were to bring one thing to the attention of others in your workplace about any aspect of implementing a major change like the RQF, what would it be? |
### Table 8.1 (continued) Overview of Chapter’s Thematic Structure, Items and Response Rate

| Variations in RQF Involvement | This section presents interviewee (n = 34) responses to the following three second-round interview items:  
Q1) How involved have you been in preparing for the RQF to date? Is this typical of others around you?  
Q4) What will be your role in relation to the RQF once implemented?  
Q) An underlying assumption of this research was that staff in research service offices across the sector would have a similar experience regarding the RQF in terms of their knowledge, their engagement and their involvement in preparing for its implementation but they do not seem to. Even across peer groups, it appears that some people are heavily involved and some are not involved at all, do you have any idea why there would be such variability across the sector? |

| Perceptions of Future RQF Effects | This section presents interviewee (n = 34) perspectives to the following question from the second-round interview:  
Q6) Imagine 10 years have passed and it is the year 2017, what do you think research administration/research activity in your university looks like? What do you think your university looks like? |

### Knowledge of and Initial Response to the RQF

**Participant Knowledge of RQF**

Participants were surveyed as to how much they knew about the proposed RQF policy, using a five-point Likert scale (Q53). The responses were analysed using the descriptive statistics function of SPSS, with the response categories and results shown in Table 8.2. The findings indicated that all but eight of the 188 participants who responded to this question knew at least ‘A Little’ about the forthcoming RQF, with just over a third reporting that they knew ‘A Lot’ about it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>N/A to My Position</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
<td>40 (21%)</td>
<td>77 (41%)</td>
<td>63 (34%)</td>
<td>188 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.3 reports the above ‘Level of Knowledge…’ data by distribution across the five main staffing subgroups; the results showing that RQF policy knowledge levels were highest for the ‘Deputy Director/Director’ subgroup followed by ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’ and then ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’.
Table 8.3 Level of Knowledge of Proposed RQF Policy by Staffing Subgroup (n = 157)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Scale</th>
<th>N/A To My Position</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staffing Subgroup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA(Grants/Finance)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>11 (22%)</td>
<td>30 (59%)</td>
<td>10 (20%)</td>
<td>51 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Grad Studies/Grad Students)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
<td>8 (22%)</td>
<td>17 (47%)</td>
<td>7 (19%)</td>
<td>36 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Data/IT Systems)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>10 (32%)</td>
<td>13 (42%)</td>
<td>31 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Ethics)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>20 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Director/Director</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>15 (79%)</td>
<td>19 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
<td>36 (23%)</td>
<td>64 (41%)</td>
<td>50 (32%)</td>
<td>157 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.4 shows that participants from four of the five university groupings reported similar levels of knowledge, with between 74 and 79 per cent indicating they knew ‘Some’ to ‘A Lot’ about the RQF, and the remaining group of participants from the REG university grouping reporting the lowest overall levels of knowledge.

Table 8.4 Level of Knowledge of Proposed RQF Policy by University Group (n = 165)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Scale</th>
<th>N/A To My Position</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go8</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>9 (13%)</td>
<td>27 (40%)</td>
<td>26 (39%)</td>
<td>67 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATN</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>10 (32%)</td>
<td>13 (42%)</td>
<td>31 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRU</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
<td>11 (44%)</td>
<td>8 (32%)</td>
<td>25 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGU</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>11 (48%)</td>
<td>23 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REG</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>6 (32%)</td>
<td>10 (53%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>19 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
<td>34 (21%)</td>
<td>64 (39%)</td>
<td>60 (36%)</td>
<td>165 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between participant characteristics and three levels (of a possible five – the two Likert scale categories: ‘Not Applicable to My Position’ and ‘Nothing’ were set aside for this analysis) of participant knowledge regarding the RQF policy. Findings of significance as shown in Table 8.5 suggest that the following participants were more likely to report higher levels of knowledge regarding the RQF policy: university qualified as opposed to non-university qualified \( (p < .001) \); on higher salaries compared to those on lower salaries \( (p < .001) \); had indicated a ‘Research Service’ career
alignment as opposed to a career in ‘University Administration’ \( (p = .049) \); or, had previous experience as an academic compared to those who did not \( (p = .025) \).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Characteristics</th>
<th>Knowledge Scale</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A Little</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>A Lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level ( (n = 180) )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No University qualifications</td>
<td>19 (44%)</td>
<td>18 (42%)</td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- University qualifications</td>
<td>21 (15%)</td>
<td>59 (43%)</td>
<td>57 (42%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Level ( (n = 180) )</td>
<td>23.878 (2)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lower (HEW 2-7)</td>
<td>29 (31%)</td>
<td>48 (51%)</td>
<td>18 (19%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Higher (HEW 8-10+)</td>
<td>11 (13%)</td>
<td>29 (34%)</td>
<td>45 (53%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Alignment ( (n = 158) )</td>
<td>6.040 (2)</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research Service</td>
<td>19 (19%)</td>
<td>36 (37%)</td>
<td>43 (44%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- University Administration</td>
<td>18 (30%)</td>
<td>27 (45%)</td>
<td>15 (25%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Employment as an Academic ( (n = 180) )</td>
<td>7.355 (2)</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Yes</td>
<td>8 (15%)</td>
<td>20 (36%)</td>
<td>27 (49%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No</td>
<td>32 (26%)</td>
<td>57 (46%)</td>
<td>36 (29%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When participant education level was controlled for salary, findings of significance occurred for those on the ‘Lower’ (HEW 2-7) salary range \( (\chi^2 = 11.779, df = 2, p = .003) \), but participant education level by ‘Higher’ (HEW 8-10+) salary range had small cell counts and was therefore not reported. The observed versus expected frequencies indicated that non-university qualified participants in the ‘Lower’ salary ranges were more likely to report lower levels of RQF policy knowledge, than university qualified participants in the same salary range. Participant age, gender, degree of professional alignment, or previous research experience (or lack thereof), was not found to be of significance. Tests of significance were not performed by staffing subgroup or university grouping due to small cell counts.

**Initial Institutional Responses to RQF**

Questionnaire participants were asked to indicate from a list of options, one or more ways in which their university had responded to the proposed RQF policy implementation (Q60). The responses were analysed using the descriptive statistics function of SPSS; the results of which are shown in Figure 8.6, with the response options listed in the left axis. The bars on the graph are ordered highest to lowest majority responses.
Responses that specified ‘Other’ were examined and recoded to the nine listed options, noting that: the appointment of dedicated RQF officers/staff were included under ‘Targeted Staff Recruitment’; ‘Undertaken RQF Trials’ included related activities, such as universities gathering academic staff evidence portfolios; ‘Increased IT Infrastructure’ included any form of software development, or data integrity checks undertaken in preparation for the RQF; and, ‘Not Sure’/‘Not Applicable’ captured responses from staff either new to their current positions, and therefore unable to comment, or those who were told their positions were not directly affected by the RQF and were, therefore, not part of any RQF preparatory activity.

These findings indicated that ‘Specific Communication to Staff Involved’ (for example: those in Research Service offices) and general communication via ‘Staff Newsletters/Websites’, were the most cited response actions followed by universities having undertaken RQF Trials or subcomponents of trials (for example: collecting staff evidence portfolios), and/or had increased their IT infrastructure (including conducting data integrity audits or software development).

**Participant Involvement in Institutional Response to RQF**

The questionnaire investigated the involvement of participants in the development of their respective University’s and Unit’s response to the proposed RQF policy, using a five-point Likert scale (Q61-62). The response categories and frequencies are shown in Table 8.7. As indicated, just over half of participants had no direct involvement in their ‘University’ response and more than a fifth reported ‘Some’ to ‘A Lot’ of involvement. In comparison, a six per cent
overall increase in the level of participant involvement was shown for the development of ‘Unit’ responses to the RQF.

Table 8.7 Participant Involvement in Formal Responses to Proposed RQF Policy \((n = 188)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Item</th>
<th>N/A to my Position</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>18 (10%)</td>
<td>80 (42%)</td>
<td>38 (20%)</td>
<td>26 (14%)</td>
<td>26 (14%)</td>
<td>188 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit</td>
<td>23 (12%)</td>
<td>64 (34%)</td>
<td>44 (24%)</td>
<td>23 (12%)</td>
<td>34 (18%)</td>
<td>188 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the findings on participant involvement were stratified by the five main staffing subgroups, those who were either ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’ or ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ were more likely to have indicated high levels of participation in either the ‘University’ or ‘Unit’ responses, than any other staffing subgroup. The involvement of RMA from these two staffing groups points to the strategic import of the RQF, the top-down nature of its introduction to universities, and the expected impacts of the policy requirements on university information systems. Differences in RMA participation are explored in detail later in the chapter under the heading: ‘Variations in RQF Involvement’. Tests of significance were not conducted due to small cell counts.

Sources of RQF Information

Questionnaire participants were asked: ‘What were your primary sources of information about the proposed RQF policy?’ (Q54). They were given seven options, asked to provide more than one if pertinent, although they could also add more. The additions were analysed and redistributed across the seven response categories. Mention of newspaper articles was included under ‘Personal Interest/Networking’; internal websites were included under ‘University In-House’; and specialist conferences were included under ‘Professional Associations’. The nominated response categories are presented on the left hand axis of Figure 8.8 below. ‘University In-House’ information was the most cited primary source, followed by ‘Government Policy Documents’ and the ‘Line Manager’. This suggests most looked to circulation and provision of information internally.
Figure 8.8 Primary Sources of Information on the RQF (n = 188)

Type of Information Sought About the RQF

Questionnaire participants were given the opportunity to specify what additional information they needed about the RQF (Q55). Responses (n = 188) were entered into QSR.NVivo 8 and analysed for content, noting that responses could be coded to more than one category (total occurrence of mention given in brackets). The categories below need to be read from the perspective that they signify a need, for the most part, for more information.

Policy Details/Guidelines (n = 66)

Just over one third (35 per cent) sought more detail ranging from participants simply asking for ‘Lots’ more information, to more detailed requests such as:

God how much do you want me to say?! The information I still need (and we all need) is everything DEST and the Minister have not given us. This includes details of the RQF model, the funding model, attribution rules, and eligibility rules, whether funding relationships will be linear or asymptotic, guidelines relevant to groupings, evaluation panel membership, timelines, guidelines for preparing submissions… (32203).

Watching Brief/Awaiting Official Release of Detail (n = 52)

A large number of comments indicated participants were as informed as they could be until more detail was released. Specific examples provided ranged from detail about how they were kept abreast of events: ‘…we have an RQF Officer who feeds me/our area that information and it is on our website in a comprehensive manner’ (32330); through to waiting to know ‘…the right process in our university to make it work’ (32284).
Future Impacts and Implications \( (n = 22) \)
The next category moved away from the policy detail. The findings indicated there were a range of additional concerns among 12 per cent of participants. Among the concerns were quite big issues such as: whether or not they would still have jobs post-RQF implementation; what impacts the RQF would have on postgraduate research students; what the effects of the RQF would be on the sector (or individual institution); how their roles would be impacted by the change; how research service offices were going to deal with the expected increased work flows; or how research information systems would be effected. Clearly, they wanted access to information that would give them more certainty about where the RQF would lead – seeking a ‘…better understanding of the effect it will have on the sector, but don’t we all?’ (32122). Another participant, mindful of the intensity of the exercise, queried:

> Implications for management of the program – how is the Research Service Office expected to manage the mountains of information and translate it into the form that will be required by DEST? (32087).

Will The RQF Proceed? \( (n = 14) \)
Some seven per cent, in one way or another, indicated the need to know if the RQF would proceed.

In-Depth Detail \( (n = 4) \)
A few wanted to have more detail about the principles and intentions underpinning the policy, with one participant indicating they probably needed ‘…a personal discussion regarding the theoretical basis of the approach, so I can really commit to it…’ (31280).

Other Universities Preparation \( (n = 2) \)
Two participants indicated curiosity about how other universities were preparing for the RQF, with one making the comment that: ‘It appears that most universities are keeping their plans secret…’ (32171). Similar responses were picked up under the theme of research ‘positioning’ or ‘gameplaying’, and these are discussed in several subsections later in this chapter.

Of the remaining responses, 16 participants indicated they were not sure enough to address the questionnaire item, and a further 12 indicated that the RQF was not applicable to their role; therefore, they required no further information about the policy change.
Previous RQF Related Experience of Participants

Participants were asked if they had had ‘direct experience at a university of a process similar to the Research Quality Framework (RQF), such as the UK’s Research Assessment Exercise?’ (Q58), and what that experience was. Seventeen participants acknowledged having prior experience of research assessment, with more than half of them having taken part in trial RQF runs conducted by Australian institutions where they were currently, or previously, employed. The remainder reported that their experience was connected with: New Zealand’s Performance Based Research Fund; the UK’s RAE; or other large scale government-led policy shifts focused on accountability (for example: AUQA).

Initial Reactions to the Announcement of the RQF

In the first interview round, interviewees were asked about their initial reactions upon hearing of the RQF for the first time (Q9). The following material highlights some of the ‘behind-the-scenes’ thinking about the policy.

Several interviewees speculated on the decision by government to introduce the RQF policy:

…I can see this is a new wave of government renewal and…it’s a way of engaging the sector in a new way and it’s the sort of thing that federal ministers want to do. So there is a political level and a practical level, what it turns out to be at the practical level is way down the track and how it effects people but it is just another wave of review and government benchmarking that comes along from time to time…but it’s pretty broad for the sector (1118).

…it they are cancelling it in Europe [sic], why are we then trying to do something? … if Europe says: “No, do not worry about it”, why are we doing it? (1205).

I think that there is understandable nervousness outside the Group of Eight about whether or not we are seeing a move back to having a handful of research universities and then… the rest of us teaching institutions and so I had a degree of suspicion about what the real agenda was (1135).

One interviewee indicated concern for her own institution:
…a very significant concern about the impact on my university…we might not do as well under the RQF regime as we did under the IGS\textsuperscript{23} type regime (1227).

Whilst for another, further government-led policy changes were no particular surprise:

…well I have been around for a long time and I have seen other changes like the RTS for example, so I really see change as a part of life and it did not really upset me or worry me too much. Basically there is something new to get your head around – another change (1224).

Others pondered the usefulness or worth of the announced policy:

…waste of time…I just think that there is such an enormous burden on universities in Australia, particularly in terms of Federal government interference, the hoops we need to jump through to actually get funding these days…but then that is the universities’ fault to a degree…I just think that the RQF is going to tie everyone up in knots for the next year and were are in for…a few surprising shifts in the relevant league table but nothing great (1126).

I thought “That is good…the quality framework”,….and no matter what emphasis they place on things, whether its publications or completions or whatever, I think as a whole every university needs to perform better and it needs to be in an open way and it needs to be benchmarked properly, which is done already through the reporting system that we have now, but because the budgets are much more geared towards performance nowadays, you just have to get your own performance up to scratch (1231).

My first reaction was, without knowing the details, I am a little concerned about the process of measuring academic staff’s output because… the moment you try to measure something you change the behaviour (1101).

Some of the initial reactions involved the potential of the new policy to affect researcher behaviour, and by extension the work of RMA:

\textsuperscript{23} The Australian Federal Government’s ‘Institutional Grant Scheme’ (IGS) is a historical research block grant program previously provided to higher education providers annually. It has since been replaced in 2010 by the ‘Joint Research Engagement’ (JRE) scheme.
...there is going to have to be some sticks and carrots attached to that work which would raise the value of the activity in the eyes of academics because they could actually see that there was a direct benefit or a direct curtailing of some of their activities by their participation (with) the RQF. So...my first reaction was “Well maybe they will start to take notice of some of these things we are asking them and they will see that they are important ...”...that was my very first reaction; I have had a lot of reactions since then (laughter) (1207).

I guess ...from a personal sort of research manager perspective...we are going to be responsible for a lot of this work and a lot of this training of our academics to present themselves (1230).

With regard to the impact on the work of RMA – one saw a potential opportunity:

I do not really want to change jobs but I want some challenges, so I kind of put my hand up and said: “Look, can I get involved in this?” (1213).

What is apparent in the interviewees’ recall of their initial reactions is the substantial engagement with the RQF policy and its implications.

UNDERSTANDING OF RQF SIGNIFICANCE

Questionnaire participants were asked to rate how significant the RQF change was compared to all the other changes or reforms which they had experienced, using a six-point Likert scale to denote degree of significance (Q56). The response categories and frequencies are shown in Table 8.9. Just under two-thirds of participants reported that the RQF rated ‘Quite Strongly’ to ‘Very Strongly’ in terms of its significance as a workplace policy change.

Table 8.9 Rate of RQF Significance Compared to Other Changes/Reforms (n = 188)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Mildly</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Quite Strongly</th>
<th>Very Strongly</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>3(2%)</td>
<td>20(10%)</td>
<td>19(10%)</td>
<td>24(13%)</td>
<td>51(27%)</td>
<td>71(38%)</td>
<td>188(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They were also asked if they were aware of a more significant change than the RQF, what it was and why was it more significant (Q57). Of the total 112 responses to this open-ended item, 32 per cent thought that the RQF was the ‘Most Significant’ change they had experienced. A further 21 per cent were not sure they could say it was the most significant change. Others mentioned the ‘Dawkins Reforms’ (see: Dawkins, 1988) of the 1990s that led to university and
college amalgamations (12 per cent), and the rest ranged widely across several facets that included: the ‘Research Training Scheme (RTS)’; ‘Ethics Legislation’; ‘Government Funding Changes’; and ‘Technological Advances’; ‘Internal Restructuring’; and ‘Other Changes/Reforms’.

Perceived Impacts of RQF

Questionnaire participants were asked how much the RQF would be likely to impact their workloads, their university, the university sector, academics, research activity and research quality (Q59). The full-set of responses \((n = 188)\) were recorded on a five-point Likert scale from ‘None’ to ‘Very High’. Table 8.10 should be read in conjunction with Tables 8.11 – 8.15, where significant differences for each area related to participant characteristics are given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q59) In relation to the</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the proposed</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implementation of the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQF, how much</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impact will likely be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-your workload?</td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-your university?</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-the university sector?</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Academics?</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-research activity?</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-research quality?</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown, at least two-thirds of participants expected the RQF to have a high to very high impact on their university, the university sector, academics, and research activity. The results were more mixed for expected impacts on participant workload and on research quality; the latter of which reported the highest ‘Not Sure’ impact rating (29 per cent of participants). Only a very few participants expected the RQF to have no impact on the areas listed (see Table 8.10).

Chi-square tests were conducted to see if there were any relationships between participant characteristics and the degree to which they expected the RQF to have an impact for each of the six nominated areas. To do this, four response categories in the questionnaire item’s Likert scale were collapsed into two categories; ‘Low’ (combination of ‘Very Little’ and ‘Moderate’), and ‘High’ (combination of ‘High’ to ‘Very High’). To avoid small cell counts, the two response categories of ‘None’ and ‘Not Sure’ were set aside for this series of statistical analyses. The results are presented in Table 8.11 through to Table 8.15.
Expected Impacts on Participant Workload

Table 8.11 shows that impact of the RQF on workload was expected to differ significantly by salary level ($p = .042$), staffing subgroup ($p = < .001$) and RQF knowledge level ($p = < .001$); but not by gender, education level, or career alignment. Drawing on the observed versus expected frequencies, and taking the differences in turn: higher salary level participants were more likely to expect a greater workload impact than those on lower salaries; participants who were ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’ or ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ expected higher workload impacts than participants from the other three main staffing designations; and participants with the highest knowledge of the RQF policy were more likely to expect higher workload impacts than those with a lesser knowledge.

<p>| Table 8.11 Relationships between Anticipated Degree of RQF Impact on Participant Workload and Participant Characteristics |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated Degree of RQF Impact on Workload</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Impact</td>
<td>High Impact</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (df)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender ($n = 154$)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.110 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Male</td>
<td>25 (53%)</td>
<td>22 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Female</td>
<td>60 (56%)</td>
<td>47 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level ($n = 154$)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.583 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-No University Qualifications</td>
<td>19 (61%)</td>
<td>12 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-University Qualifications</td>
<td>66 (54%)</td>
<td>57 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Level ($n = 154$)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.133 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Lower (HEW 2-7)</td>
<td>46 (64%)</td>
<td>26 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Higher (HEW 8-10+)</td>
<td>36 (41%)</td>
<td>52 (59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Staffing Subgroup ($n = 128$)</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.332 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Director/Director</td>
<td>6 (32%)</td>
<td>13 (68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Grants/Finance)</td>
<td>27 (66%)</td>
<td>14 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Graduate Studies/Students)</td>
<td>19 (70%)</td>
<td>8 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Data/IT Systems)</td>
<td>7 (26%)</td>
<td>20 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (Ethics)</td>
<td>12 (86%)</td>
<td>2 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Alignment ($n = 135$)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.192 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Research service</td>
<td>46 (54%)</td>
<td>39 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-University Administration</td>
<td>29 (58%)</td>
<td>21 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Knowledge of RQF Policy ($n = 152$)</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.389 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A Little</td>
<td>19 (76%)</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Some</td>
<td>42 (65%)</td>
<td>23 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A Lot</td>
<td>22 (36%)</td>
<td>40 (64%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expected Impacts on Participant’s University

Participants’ expectations were that the RQF would have a high to very high impact on their university (see Table 8.10). This level of expected impact is the second highest recorded (79 per cent of participants). The analyses captured in Table 8.12 indicate that participant salary level and career alignment were not found to be of significance. Due to small cell counts, tests
of significance were not performed for participant gender, education level, staffing subgroup, or level of knowledge regarding the RQF policy.

Table 8.12 Relationships between Anticipated Degree of RQF Impact on Participant’s University and Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Characteristics</th>
<th>Anticipated Degree of RQF Impact on University</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low Impact</td>
<td>High Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Level (n = 165)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Lower (HEW 2-7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (13%)</td>
<td>70 (87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Higher (HEW 8-10+)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 (8%)</td>
<td>78 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Alignment (n = 145)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Research service</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 (7%)</td>
<td>86 (93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-University Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (11%)</td>
<td>46 (89%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expected Impacts on the University Sector

Participant expectations were that the RQF would have a high to very high impact on the university sector (see Table 8.10), this being the highest expected area of impact (81 per cent of participants). Such expectations were found not to be significantly related to participant gender ($\chi^2 = 2.326$, df = 1, $p = .127$). No other tests of significance were performed due to small cell counts.

Table 8.13 Relationships between Anticipated Degree of RQF Impact on Academics and Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Characteristics</th>
<th>Anticipated Degree of RQF Impact on Academics</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low Impact</td>
<td>High Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (n = 161)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 (15%)</td>
<td>39 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 (10%)</td>
<td>103 (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level (n = 161)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-No University Qualifications</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (15%)</td>
<td>28 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-University Qualifications</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (11%)</td>
<td>114 (89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Level (n = 161)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Lower (HEW 2-7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (13%)</td>
<td>67 (87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Higher (HEW 8-10+)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 (11%)</td>
<td>75 (89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Alignment (n = 142)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Research service</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (15%)</td>
<td>78 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-University Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
<td>46 (92%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expected Impacts on Academics

Seventy-five per cent of participants expected that the RQF would have a high to very high impact on academics (see Table 8.10). The analyses in Table 8.13 indicate that such expectations were not significantly related to participant gender, education level, salary level, or
career alignment. Due to small cell counts, tests of significance were not performed on participants’ staffing subgroup or level of knowledge about the RQF policy.

**Expected Impacts on Research Activity**

A two-thirds majority of participants indicated they expected that the RQF would have a high to very high impact on research activity (see Table 8.10). The results of further analyses reported in Table 8.14 indicate that such expectations were significantly related to participant gender ($p = .012$). Drawing on the observed versus expected frequencies, it appeared that female participants were much more likely to report that the RQF would have a high to very high impact on research activity than the males. Participant salary level, education level, career alignment, or levels of RQF knowledge, had no significant effect on the impact rating given. Tests of significance were not performed for participant staffing subgroups due to small cell counts.

### Table 8.14 Relationships between Anticipated Degree of RQF Impact on Research Activity and Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Characteristics</th>
<th>Anticipated Degree of RQF Impact on Research Activity</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Impact</td>
<td>High Impact</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (df)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender ($n = 156$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Male</td>
<td>15 (33%)</td>
<td>30 (67%)</td>
<td>6.375 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Female</td>
<td>17 (15%)</td>
<td>94 (85%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level ($n = 156$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No University Qualifications</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>28 (87%)</td>
<td>1.585 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- University Qualifications</td>
<td>28 (23%)</td>
<td>96 (77%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Level ($n = 156$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lower (HEW 2-7)</td>
<td>12 (16%)</td>
<td>63 (84%)</td>
<td>1.804 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Higher (HEW 8-10+)</td>
<td>20 (25%)</td>
<td>61 (75%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Alignment ($n = 137$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research service</td>
<td>16 (18%)</td>
<td>72 (82%)</td>
<td>.770 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- University Administration</td>
<td>12 (25%)</td>
<td>37 (75%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Knowledge of RQF Policy ($n = 155$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A Little</td>
<td>7 (25%)</td>
<td>21 (75%)</td>
<td>.557 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Some</td>
<td>13 (19%)</td>
<td>54 (81%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A Lot</td>
<td>11 (18%)</td>
<td>49 (82%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expected Impacts on Research Quality**

Participant expectations were that the RQF would have a moderate to high impact on the research quality (see Table 8.10). Further analyses reported in Table 8.15, indicate that such expectations were significantly related to participant gender ($p = .009$) and education level ($p = .005$). Drawing on the observed versus expected frequencies, the differences found were that female participants were more likely to expect a greater impact on research quality than were
the males. Likewise, those participants who were not university qualified expected a higher impact on research quality than those with university qualifications. Participant salary level, university grouping, career alignment, or levels of RQF knowledge, had no significant effect on the impact rating for this item. Tests of significance were not performed for participant staffing subgroups due to small cell counts.

Table 8.15 Relationships between Anticipated Degree of RQF Impact on Research Quality and Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Characteristics</th>
<th>Anticipated Degree of RQF Impact on Research Quality</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Pearson Chi-Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Impact</td>
<td>High Impact</td>
<td>( \chi^2 ) (df)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender ((n = 131))</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Male</td>
<td>6 (53%)</td>
<td>19 (47%)</td>
<td>6.916 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Female</td>
<td>26 (29%)</td>
<td>65 (71%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level ((n = 131))</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No University Qualifications</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
<td>25 (86%)</td>
<td>7.896 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- University Qualifications</td>
<td>43 (42%)</td>
<td>59 (58%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salary Level ((n = 131))</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lower (HEW 2-7)</td>
<td>21 (31%)</td>
<td>46 (69%)</td>
<td>1.226 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Higher (HEW 8-10+)</td>
<td>26 (41%)</td>
<td>38 (59%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career Alignment ((n = 115))</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research service</td>
<td>31 (41%)</td>
<td>45 (59%)</td>
<td>1.105 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- University Administration</td>
<td>12 (31%)</td>
<td>27 (69%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Knowledge of RQF Policy ((n = 130))</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A Little</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>14 (70%)</td>
<td>1.573 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Some</td>
<td>19 (32%)</td>
<td>41 (68%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A Lot</td>
<td>21 (42%)</td>
<td>29 (58%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reflections on the Potential Magnitude and Impacts of the RQF**

In the first of the interviews the participants were asked to further comment on the way the RQF might be a significant change (Q10). The responses are reported under three main headings: ‘Significance and Magnitude of the RQF Change’; ‘Broad Sector Impacts’; and ‘Closer to Home Impacts’.

**Significance and Magnitude of the RQF Change**

A number of interviewees were adamant about the magnitude of the RQF, noting it was going to be ‘massive’, ‘huge’, ‘big’ and ‘significant’ compared to the other changes.

…it’s going to be a massive shift, even bigger than the RTS (1237).

…most significant impact on Australian universities…ever… (1202).
…it’s the single biggest policy issue affecting universities in the next two years (1103).

…it’s going to be huge, especially if the impact is to create…a two or three tiered system (1232).

Some were more reserved, not sure of the full details:

…it could potentially be (but) we do not really know how it’s going to be used yet (1224).

…it could be very significant but until we know the panel structure…underpinning metrics…it will be difficult to judge (1116).

One interviewee noted that the RQF had the potential to be ‘very significant’, because ‘it’s going to define people and researcher’s habits’ (1230), while another elaborated that it was significant because it would ‘separate people into research active and non-research active’ (1231). Both were picking up on the general discourse regarding the RQF, that reallocation of funding changes both personal behaviours and institutional priorities. There were precedents they could draw on to support this:

It’s going to be quite significant if it has the same sort of impacts that it’s had in the UK and New Zealand… (1207).

Further, in relation to behaviour, interviewees speculated that the RQF would change the way projects were determined (1214, 1116), through to how knowledge was disseminated (1237).

**Broad Sector Impacts**

Interviewees anticipated policy driven impacts and effects both on the ‘broad sector’ level and ‘closer to home’ (presented in the next subsection), with the latter including participant expectations of being personally affected by the change.

**Changes for Researchers and Research in General**

The potential for greater delineation between the teaching and research aspects of the academic role was a key feature of participant responses. One possible effect of the RQF’s focus on quality according to one interviewee was that it may tease out the ‘issue of whether some people should be doing research at all or just focusing on teaching’ (1224). Others described this potential change effect on researchers thus: ‘Some academics could get locked out of research’
(1210); and ‘…those who think they are researchers now will probably not be in 5 to 10 years-time’ (1227). One interviewee responded in more philosophical terms:

As an academic, am I worth less to the institution if I am principally a teacher or supervising research students rather than necessarily publishing myself? (1135).

Perceptions such as those described above are in keeping with the concerns raised in the literature and newspaper commentary at the time, particularly given the experiences of UK academics in relation to the UK RAE, as outlined in the opening chapter.

Others who were interviewed pointed to tangible effects relating to increases in research performance measures and expectations promoted by the RQF; such as the push to publish in peer-review journals and/or attend peer-reviewed conferences (1217), and a noticeable or anticipated increase in grant applications (1204). The information gathering aspects of the RQF and the flagged policy-driven focus on ‘research impact’ were also expected to have change effects, with interviewees venturing that: researchers will become more conscientious about recording information to ‘demonstrate quality and impact’ (1111); ‘smart’ academics will be couching and writing grant applications in very different terms to account for research impact (1223); academics will need to be individually managed with their data outputs (1236); and, there will be a ‘need to be more specific in the use of RFCD24 codes’ (1225).

There was also a line of thinking apparent from the responses that the RQF policy mechanism would have the impact of bringing greater accountability to the work of researchers:

…certain people who call themselves research leaders are actually being called to account for the first time … that is a good thing… (1232).

I think it will improve research…measuring…output can only improve research and also the economy and the standing of universities (1115).

Other interviewees were not so sure:

Raises the question as to how ‘quality’ can be quantified… (1205).

24 The Research Fields, Courses and Disciplines (RFCD) Classification is a system used to categorise fields of research for government reporting purposes.
I think probably I am a little bit entrenched in the … idea that universities are a … place in society for sort of trying things out and developing knowledge, almost sometimes for the sake of it and sometimes it’s going to…be applicable, benefiting the way that humans and animals and the environment operate or work or what we do… the RQF for me … makes universities more accountable, which in some ways is a good thing but, but it’s also taking away from what I think is a really important aspect of our society, that to have universities be accountable for some aspects of what they do but just sort of leave them alone … the feeling for me … is … we have swung in the opposite direction where we have been, where we have to be too accountable and meet too many KPIs and… the researcher or the research has to be too applicable in the year that it’s done… (1212).

There was also the expectation of greater research collaboration and/or a concentration of research funding, such that with the advent of the RQF: researchers may become more ‘group-orientated’ (1111); funding may become more centralised into more significant research centres (1116); and ‘it may result in concentration of effort’ (1227). Whilst on the flip side, according to one interviewee – increasing regulation could translate into fewer people being interested in academia (1237). Further possible change effects on research in general as advanced by participants, included that it would: ‘drive research to being applied and driven by industry instead of fundamental’ (1227); diminish ‘blue-sky’ research funds (1206); give ‘greater emphasis on category 1 grants as a proxy of quality... greater emphasis on bibliometrics’ (1128); and affect universities’ research missions (1128).

**Shake Up the System**

A number of interviewees noted the potential for the RQF to change the nature of the Australian Higher Education Sector, with particular emphasis on the rolling back of the ‘Dawkins’ reforms’ and a return to a tiered system of education (1214, 1220, 1221, 1230, 1233). Several of the concerns raised are captured in the following quotation:

Rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer: increased consolidation of research in Go8 universities; REG and NGU may not survive new research paradigm; IRU and ATN to survive by specialising (1227).

Increases in workload were also a concern: ‘universities will feel so stretched…beyond capacity really’ (1214), with the expectation of ‘increased workload for everyone’ (1237). In a related vein, given the expected resource demands of the policy change one interviewee remarked that:
It’s good for universities to get a bit of a shake-up but whether this is the right way or whether it’s a waste of resources I am just not sure (1206).

**Manoeuvering for Position (Game Playing)**

There were a large number of references to forms of poaching or head-hunting of research staff between universities (1204, 1207, 1225, 1227, 1229, 1230, 1232, 1234, 1236), which were evidence of institutional manoeuvering for position or ‘game playing’ under the RQF mechanism. This was described by one interviewee as involving a:

Lot more fussing about who you have got and how you get them and what they have done…to a certain extent that is a distraction from the main game…which is a shame (1232).

Whilst another interviewee made the comment that:

Previous game plans designed to maximise research quantum will come to no avail under the new research policy paradigm (1126).

Other forms of institutional manoeuvering included moves by universities to clarify who were research staff, and who were not. Two examples:

Universities are already ‘second-guessing’ RQF results and offering staff redundancies in preparation… (1206).

Lot of gamesmanship happening…we are probably going to end up with chunks of the academic population being just teaching-only unfortunately … the very valuable teaching/research nexus … could be lost (1231).

The perceived high-stakes nature of the RQF was also apparent in the comments of two interviewees: ‘…my university is being very, very secretive…so I know little about this…’ (1222) and ‘…we’ll be investing everything in this (the RQF) because it will effect (our reputation)...whether we get students…staff” (1214). Conversely, one of the interviewees reported that their university was ‘in denial’ about the RQF happening (1223).
‘Closer to Home’ Impacts
Changes in the Internal Research Environment
A number of the interviewees provided extended responses about possible changes to the internal environment and the potential impacts on research activity, reputation and funding:

In terms of reputation I think we are going to have to look at seeking reputation in specific areas so I think it will tend to drive my university and probably a lot of others more into niche specialisation… I think it will drive our decision making when we look at things like CRCs\(^\text{25}\) and collaborations and joint ventures in a very different sort of way. So when looking at the sorts of things that I commonly deal with personally, the bottom-line question for me has always been: “Are we going to make money out of this?” because if we make money out of this then we make more money through block funding… Now the question is going to be: “Are we going to get publications and impact out of this?” And that might actually drive you in a very different direction… (1227).

…an impetus for the university to identify particular research areas, which the Commonwealth has been asking us to do for years and there has always been a lot of resistance from academics, but it adds an impetus to say: “Right, these are the areas, these are our flags that we are going to stick our name to” and actually invest in those areas and encourage researchers to tailor their research into those areas (1207).

Other responses corroborated questionnaire findings in that they focused on the intensive information-driven nature of the RQF and the need for sophisticated IT infrastructure and databases (1126, 1128, 1223, 1231, 1233). The implications for workload were also a common comment (1219, 1232, 1234), while a number anticipated a requirement for more jobs and resourcing ‘… (we) probably will need a whole section of staff to deal with the RQF (1219). Some anticipated more movement in the academic workforce, changes in recruitment strategies and academic work (124, 1225, 1231), with consequent implications for RMA. For example, the shifting of academics between institutions was expected to result in greater workload for central research offices in ‘transferring groups and moving things around (thereby) altering financial arrangements’ (1231). Whilst another indicated that there would be changes in the work of RMA as a result of the RQF, given the ‘need to provide different forms of advice and assistance to researchers and research groups’ (1111). The notion that the RQF may put some pressure on research student completion was another direction taken in the comment (1217). In

\(^\text{25}\) Established in 1991, the Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs) program is a government sponsored initiative designed to drive research collaborations between researchers, industries, governments and communities, in targeted research priority areas.
view of expected increase in workloads, one participant hoped that academics would ‘more actively participate’ in the administrative process (1207).

It is important to acknowledge that the scope or extent of the policy effect perceived by the RMA as has been reported in this subsection, may be perceived differently by other groups experiencing the reform. Indeed, ‘What seems a fundamental reform from the perspective of the affected actor may appear as marginal change from a systems perspective...’ (Knill & Lenschow, 2001, p. 188). Using this line of reasoning, whilst support can be found in these findings that the RQF was perceived to be a significant policy change event, the significance or scope of this change may have been perceived differently: by other actor groups involved; when viewed at different levels of abstraction; in hindsight, or given differences in the data-collection time-scale; or via the application of different research methodologies.

Moving on from the findings on RQF impacts, the next section presents participant responses to questions on RQF resourcing requirements, as well as providing illustrations of ‘typical’ policy implementation and associated challenges, contrasted with that of the RQF example.

MANAGING AND IMPLEMENTING POLICY CHANGE

Participants were asked four questionnaire and three interview items (as detailed in Table 8.1 and recounted below) designed to build a picture of the probable resourcing implications of the RQF policy, the expected challenges with its implementation, as well as typical steps taken in relation to the implementation of a policy change in general; and for the RQF specifically. The findings are presented in four subsections below.

Anticipated RQF Resourcing Requirements

Participants were asked to nominate the further resources that would be required by their university in the course of responding to the demands of the RQF (Q63); and of these resources, what were the most (Q64) and least (Q65) likely to be provided. The nominated categories were: ‘Initial Staff Training’; ‘Ongoing Staff Training’; ‘Initial Policy Implementation Funding’; ‘Ongoing Additional Funding Support’; ‘More Staff in Research service’; and ‘Increased IT Infrastructure’. For ease of comparison, Figure 8.16 contrasts the findings for these three questions with three corresponding bars shown for each of the six resource categories (see Table 8.1). Each top bar in the graph represents the number of participants who feel more resourcing is required by the nominated area of expenditure. The second bar indicates how many participants believe that area is most likely to be resourced; and the third bar reports
how many participants believe that area is the least likely to be resourced. The bars on the graph have been ordered from highest to lowest number of responses to question 63.

![Figure 8.16 Required RQF Resourcing versus Most and Least Likely to be Provided by Universities (n = 188)](image)

The findings indicate a shortfall in all response categories between what participants specified was required by their respective universities, to what they were expecting to be provided. In particular, additional Research Service staff and ongoing support (in the form of staff training and funding) of the RQF were seen as resource areas with the biggest gaps between what was required and what was expected to be received, with ‘Initial Staff Training’ being perceived as an area of resourcing most likely to be addressed.

**RQF Implementation Challenges**

Questionnaire participants were asked in an open-ended item to nominate what they thought the biggest challenges would be in relation to the proposed RQF implementation (Q66). The 186 valid responses were analysed for common categories. The responses could be allocated to one or more of the ten categories which appear in Figure 8.17, represented by the percentage frequency of mention. ‘Increased Workload/Resource Constraints’, ‘Not Sure’ and ‘Changing Researcher Behaviour’ appeared as the top three response categories by a small margin.

The implementation challenges and concerns identified from the survey responses to this item cover similar ground to that reported earlier in the responses to the first-round interview question; namely, participant perspectives as to the significance of the RQF. This indicates that
the ‘high-stakes’ nature, potential magnitude and anticipated impacts of this policy change event, were issues at the forefront of participant considerations regarding the RQF’s implementation challenges. Such convergence in the responses also highlights the ‘complementarity’ (Greene, et al., 1989) of the study’s research instrument design, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Figure 8.17 Biggest Challenges to RQF Implementation by Occurrence (n = 247)

Each of the response categories which appear in Figure 8.17 (with the exclusion of ‘Not Sure’ and ‘Not Applicable to My Position’) are next discussed in order of highest to lowest frequency. Occurrence (total count) of mention is included in brackets, noting there is some crossover in the emergent response categories.

*Increased Workload/Resource Constraints (n = 35)*

Almost two-thirds of those surveyed specified their concern that the RQF would escalate their workload; and they wondered how they would manage this, particularly if they were not expecting concomitant staff increases, whilst having to ‘maintain business as usual’. In such cases the scenario seemed grim:

Increased workload – providing support to researchers which will be initially intensive (if not ongoing), with limited resources that may not result in positive outcomes for the university or individual researchers (32228).
Several also referred to an anticipated rise in research activity, most notably increased grant applications and the load associated with interpreting ‘…new procedures and guidelines on top of already high volumes of work…’ (32018). One participant remarked, wryly: ‘…I will most probably have to camp in the office’ (32294).

**Changing Researcher Behaviour (n = 29)**

One-third of the responses allocated to this category focused on the challenges to academics to become research active and ‘come up to speed’ (32032), and how such developments would translate into challenges for RMA, including:

… the short timeframe between issue of guidelines and real preparations; how to model and select research groupings; how to assess and demonstrate impact (32056).

One-quarter of responses were about getting academic ‘buy-in’ or engagement with the RQF, including educating and training academic staff on the policy details and ensuing guidelines and processes; and ‘…convincing research staff that the RQF is important and something they have to prepare themselves for…’ (31226).

In addition to persistent references about achieving compliance from academics and collecting information to support them, some responses were about ‘…helping academic staff to produce good assessments of their work …’ (32307), and other complex tasks that would ensue:

Our role in the main will relate to providing the research management information that will form the basis of reports to DEST and ensuring the reports are submitted as required and on time. Others bear the burden of deciding groupings, arguing quality and impact… (32289).

**IT Systems/Data Management (n = 26)**

One of the dominant concerns for participants was data management; ranging from collecting historical or retrospective data and data not currently captured by institutions, through to the demands for accuracy, storage and infrastructure in general, including new systems and software. Several participants presented lists of what they anticipated would be needed:

Implementing and testing software; developing tools and methodologies to capture missing data elements and integrate into modeling tool; dealing with data issues and process problems… (31068).
implementing requirements in a reasonable timeframe, collecting information required from historical records and updating old data with new fields, concerns over storing retrospective data. I understand we will be required to report on data we are not yet capturing! (31176).

Policy Detail (n = 25)
Over half of the responses in this category were about the challenge of not having the full RQF policy detail, the key concern being in the words of one participant: ‘…the short timeframe between the issue of guidelines and real preparations’ (32056), an issue that had been raised at the ministerial level by university leaders, as indicated in Chapter 1. There was a sense among some that the lack of information constituted a ‘stuff up’ that impeded planning (32075). A small number questioned whether the RQF would actually proceed. Other concerns were with interpretation:

It depends very much on the final data required and on simple rules like the affiliation rule. If we proceed with a model that allows a university to poach staff just before a census date, then we are setting up a system that encourages some poor behaviour (that is, the purchase of quality and impact (probably more particularly) without the need to support it over a six year period). An argument has been constructed which says that for 2008 the census data will be in the past; for example, 01/01/2005, in order to bypass the most immediate rounds of recruitment. This simply means that the poaching will occur more vigorously in the second RQF period however. There are a range of such simple definitional matters that may present challenges for most universities in Australia (31016).

The challenge of personally understanding the new policy or of educating other staff in the policy details was also raised.

Implications and Effects (n = 24)
A wide range of concerns and perspectives were captured under this category, reflecting some of the debates and opinions described in newspaper articles about the RQF and in relation to the UK RAE that were published during the RQF development phase, as described in Chapter 1. For example, a participant raised concerns about challenges associated with the ‘…potential downturn in research productivity while researchers are producing their RQF portfolios …’, whilst also indicating the challenge later on when researchers were ‘…not selected for research groupings’ (32056). Another indicated that ‘…the RQF will be a much more time-consuming
process than anyone allows for and universities need to be given additional funds from DEST to cope, since DEST are requiring our compliance…” (32075).

Whilst one participant appeared more sanguine about the impending policy change:

The RQF is just part of effective and better management. There will continue to be changes to achieve better management. So I do not focus on the RQF very much. It is only part of the picture (31233).

In addition to the perspectives highlighted in the above quotations, the remaining references under this category included: five responses about ensuring staff were aware of the implications or impacts of the new policy; three responses dealing with researcher expectations of faster turnaround times or related workload increases on research support staff, given increased research performance pressures; a further three raised concerns of funding impacts; and the small remainder were about RQF policy design concerns and their potential ramifications.

Research Positioning (Gameplaying) (n = 20)

Of the responses captured by this category: six were about the challenges of modeling and selecting research groupings to maximise funding flows; a further six were concerned with staying ahead of other universities and/or maximising their university’s position; and three were concerned about possible poaching of researchers and the need for effective countermeasures. Two examples illustrate this position:

To stay ahead of other universities ensuring my university knows how to win at the game being played! (32074).

Retaining highly successful researchers at our smaller university… (32208).

Similarly, instances of head-hunting and staff-poaching in Australian universities appear in newspaper articles (Illing, 2006b; Illing & Dayton, 2007) written at the time of this inquiry, as indicated in Chapter 1. The remaining responses under this heading were about possible funding differentiations across university groupings and/or disciplines, or the exclusive nature in which information about the RQF was being disseminated in participants’ individual institutions (a finding that is discussed in detail later in this section).
Interpreting and Administering Policy \((n = 19)\)

Most of the references were about the challenges of interpreting, applying or administering the RQF policy, including the implementation of internal related policy changes and educating staff. In the words of one participant:

> The full ramifications will be shocking to many and implementing them will be difficult and traumatic (32152).

The expected timelines and high level of work involved with meeting set deadlines were also concerns raised by several participants – particularly given full policy details were not available at the time of survey. Indeed, the finalised policy details \((The\ Research\ Quality\ Framework:\ Assessing\ the\ Quality\ and\ Impact\ of\ Research\ in\ Australia.\ RQF\ Submission\ Specifications\ (DEST,\ 2007a)\) and \(The\ Research\ Quality\ Framework:\ Assessing\ the\ Quality\ and\ Impact\ of\ Research\ in\ Australia.\ RQF\ Technical\ Specifications\ (DEST,\ 2007b)\)) were not released until mid-September 2007 – almost one year after the study’s questionnaire instrument was launched.

Policy Compliance \((n = 17)\)

Just over half of the responses were concerned with the challenges of conforming to the reporting timetable and/or meeting reporting requirements. Six responses were about academic compliance with the data collection processes, with a further two participants commenting about the need to ensure consistency in policy application across institutions or across assessment panels. For instance:

> The administration of it – the amount of time researchers and staff will need to put in to complete the necessary reports/submissions (32169).

> Having every university abide by the instructions in the same manner… (32008).

The next step was to investigate how major changes were usually implemented in the RMA workplace; what the ‘typical’ implementation challenges were, and to ask interviewed participants to comment on whether similar processes and challenges were anticipated in relation to the implementation of the RQF. Interviewees were also asked what advice they had for others in relation to the implementation of the RQF. The findings of this three-part inquiry are reported in the next subsection.
‘Typical’ Policy Implementation Processes and Challenges and the RQF

‘Typical’ Implementation Processes and the RQF

In this section, ‘policy development’ is defined as commencing from the point at which a policy need was identified and ‘policy implementation’ is defined as commencing from the point of policy execution. These definitions were not provided to participants.

In describing the policy implementation processes \(Q_2\), one interviewee outlined three types of policies and guidelines involved in the RMA workplace; namely, ‘externally imposed policy’, ‘external guidelines’ and ‘internal policies’. The first (such as the RQF) they described as; ‘Those come down from on-high and there’s no question, you have just got to do them’ (2210). ‘External Guidelines’ typically were more flexibly implemented, for example, from bodies such as the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies. And then there are ‘…internal policies which are developed and reviewed more or less constantly for any of a number of reasons’ (2210).

A number of interviewees highlighted that externally imposed policies such as the RQF can involve very different implementation processes than those used for internally-generated policies. For example:

RQF is …very different, it’s the exception. It is very much imposed from above, in fact it’s imposed from as high above as you can possibly get something imposed, but for that very reason it’s so high profile, so much recognised as inescapable, inevitable government policy, that everyone – everyone even the most difficult, obstreperous researcher – is accepting just about everything that is introduced in connection with implementing the RQF. So what I am saying, I suppose, is that the normal principles of change management and change implementation can probably be forgotten about with the RQF … (2112).

The high-profile, high-stakes nature of the RQF set it apart from other policies according to some participants, not least because ‘…politically it is everyone for themselves…’ (2104). However, not all interviewees emphasised the ‘difference’ between the RQF and external policy implementation. Two examples that illustrate this are as follows:

With any new policy, and this is applying for the RQF as well, that has impact on some of our research policies, they are generally started as a discussion within our research committee. The research committee generally then sets up a working party composed of a subset of the membership, who go away and gather data, do some reviews of activities that are taking place, talk to people around the university and then bring that back to research
committee. There are a lot of requests to the research office to generate reporting information, looking at different subsets of researchers in the university and the way that they work together, and simply asking for a lot more information about the way that people do research, the costs of doing research, the outcomes of the research, looking at it in slightly different ways. That then goes back to research committee. The research committee may send motions off to other subcommittees of academic board if it’s impacting on those, but otherwise they generally form a policy proposal and pass that through the research committee onto the academic board, and then it becomes policy of the university (2205).

And then there were some who were not too sure but expected to be told:

… we will probably be told about what has to happen and what ideas they have got and then there will be some room to comment on whether that will sort of work or whether there is a better way of doing it and then we will just do it (2203).

At the time of the interview it was evident from participant responses that a broad spectrum of preparatory activity was underway, ranging from: adopting a wait and see approach pending final policy detail or confirmation of the RQF proceeding (2211, 2215); initial steps such as the appointment of an RQF steering committee or separate RQF unit (2222, 2225); through to extensive preparations involving trial audits (2121, 2208). Some of this activity involved the research service office, while for others the preparatory activity was taking place in another organisational unit or specialist group (2222, 2218).

‘Typical’ Policy Implementation Challenges and the RQF

There is not the space to do justice to all of the forms of ‘typical’ implementation challenges interviewees faced in the workplace. However, what was most interesting in the second-round interview responses on this topic (Q3) was the difference between generally experienced policy implementation challenges, and those experienced or anticipated as a result of the RQF implementation. In most cases, the ‘typical’ challenges of: obtaining staff buy-in or engagement with the change; overcoming change resistance or change denial; ensuring adequate and appropriate communication of change processes; increasing academic awareness of and compliance with the new process/procedure/policy; and/or fostering cultural change, were reduced for the RQF implementation for three key reasons.

First, there was a ‘payoff’ for researcher compliance with RQF related information requests:
We are already starting to see that people …are cooperating more with reporting to us, things like publications… grants they hold with other institutions, etc…we have much, much better information across the board about research activity…than we did even a couple of years ago because people have understood that this is actually partly for their benefit…to have (electronic access to) their entire research track record in front of them… (2226).

Second, the implications of the RQF on the participant’s university:

… if we do not respond well then it could damage the university and I think that is a different thing from lots of other policies that have been implemented here … in this case everybody is well aware of the importance of the RQF and the amount of work that should go into trying to present (the university) in the best light possible (2208).

Lastly, because the RQF was ‘…driven from Canberra, everybody can see the value of it and we just have to do it full stop; there are no ifs and buts about it (laughter)… (2209).

Implementation challenges which remained or were exacerbated by the RQF policy were the impacts on staff workloads, and the need for adequate resourcing of the change. The RQF was also seen as a policy vehicle which could be personally confronting to academics that were not eligible to be included in the RQF data collections. The ongoing debate about whether the RQF was going to proceed also fed pockets of ‘change resistance’ or ‘change denial’ – both reported ‘typical’ implementation challenges. The short timeframe between the release of RQF policy detail and the planned data collection phase, was seen as particularly problematic from the point of view of participants with data management and IT system related responsibilities.

**Participant Advice Regarding RQF Implementation**

In response to the interview question ‘If you were to bring one thing to the attention of others in your workplace about any aspect of implementing a change like the RQF, what would it be?’ (Q5), there were main two areas of response: ‘Inclusivity’ and ‘Communication’. These two categories together captured just under two-thirds of the interview responses (noting that responses could crossover more than one response category).

**Inclusivity**

Eleven interviewees advised of the need to ensure that staff were involved in the RQF change process in various ways, including: identifying and involving all stakeholder groups (2130,
2202, 2218); ensuring collaboration or cooperation within and across stakeholder groups (2104, 2112, 2209, 2223); conducting wide-ranging consultation (to avoid staff alienation arising through lack of consultation or information) (2217); ensuring early involvement of staff – not just the ones directly involved at the outset (2207); and/or supporting impacted staff through the process in a strategic (2215) and ‘inclusive’ (2231) manner.

Communication
For eleven of those interviewed, communication was the message they most wanted to draw attention to in relation to implementing change. For them a range of strategies was important, including the need to: have robust/formal communication strategies (2106, 2132, 2216, 2228); via multiple modes and channels (to increase the chance of the change message getting through to busy people) (2210); continually reinforce the original change message (2119, 2213, 2226); and ensure people are fully informed of the likely impacts of the change at the individual, technical and operational level (2227, 2121, 2123).

Other messages that interviewees drew attention to were the need: for adequate resources (2208, 2220, 2222), specifically a comprehensive IT system (2202); to understand and focus on the impacts of the RQF changes (2209, 2211, 2225, 2234); for individual flexibility and open-mindedness during the change process (2124, 2201, 2203, 2205); and, to document implementation processes as they were completed through the use of tracking systems (2214).

VARIATIONS IN RQF INVOLVEMENT

Initial Preparatory Involvement and Post-Implementation Roles
In this subsection, the findings from the second-round interview question (Q1) on participant involvement in the initial RQF preparations are presented, together with the findings for a related interview question (Q4) regarding participants’ expected role once the RQF was implemented. Both sets of responses were entered into QSR.NVivo 8 and analysed for common themes. What became clear from the outset in analysing these questions, was that the character of RQF involvement, both pre and post implementation, was exclusively dependent on what staffing subgroup they belonged to. Given this, the responses to both items were grouped by the five main staffing subgroups, the results of which are presented below.

Deputy Directors/Directors
The interview responses revealed three levels of engagement or involvement with the RQF preparations by this staffing subgroup. At the high-end of involvement, a Research Director
may have taken carriage of their university’s RQF preparations. For example: preparing responses to government; managing or instigating RQF trials or similar processes; educating staff and fostering awareness about the RQF; advising university executives; and acting as the key liaison between the university and DEST (2112, 2119, 2231). At the mid-range level of involvement, Research Directors may have taken part in strategic RQF steering committees, with responsibility (personally and through their offices) for implementing the committees’ decisions (2121, 2225). At the lower-end of engagement, members of this staffing subgroup were kept personally informed of RQF developments and, at the time of interview, were either waiting on University senior executive directives, or did not envisage having any direct involvement in the preparations for the RQF (2132, 2211, 2218).

A further key difference in the level of involvement of this staffing subgroup and/or their direct-line staff, was whether or not carriage of the RQF-related activities came under the auspice of a research service office or was separate to it (either organisationally or in practice). In the words of one interviewee, ‘…the only people who are involved, they are very specific people at our institution and they tend to keep it very much to themselves… (2218). Along similar lines, another interviewee expressed concerns about not being able to assist in some way with the RQF preparations:

...we are…exclusive rather than inclusive and there may be a good argument as to why. I guess it is quite crucial for us to at least perceive that we get it right, but in saying that I would have liked to have thought that I may have something to contribute… (2132).

Post-implementation, interviewees who were ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’ either reported expected high levels of ongoing involvement with the RQF or virtually none. This variation again largely depended on whether their respective research service office had carriage of the RQF or not, with the most senior strategic responsibilities reserved for those Research Directors who were personally charged with taking a lead role in the RQF on behalf of their institution.

**RMA (Data/IT Systems)**

It was apparent through self-report and from the comments of interviewees from other staffing subgroups, that ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ participants had reasonably high levels of involvement in RQF preparations across the board. As indicated in the first section of the chapter, such engagement was to be expected given the multifaceted data management and reporting requirements of the RQF. However, differences did appear in the actual activities and levels of involvement of this staffing subgroup depending on the degree of sophistication being applied to the data/systems preparations, and/or depending on the development stage of the
relevant IT systems and related processes in each university. That is, for some interviewees the RQF heralded the need to develop and test new forms of software systems (2233), whilst others already had such software in place given earlier investments, and so they were focused instead on testing, modeling and capturing data (2220). Some universities were up to their third ‘RQF mock trial’; therefore the modeling and reporting had become very refined, whereas others were still devising how to capture the original data necessary to meet anticipated RQF information requirements (2228).

From the responses, ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ consistently appeared as the staffing subgroup expected to most likely have a substantive and ongoing role in the RQF following its implementation.

**RMA (Grants/Finance)**

One of the interviewees from this staffing subgroup indicated that whilst they had no direct involvement with RQF preparations, their work was being impacted by it because of changes in academic behaviour that had resulted in increased grant applications. In her words:

…there has been a huge increase in researchers seeking external funding to support their endeavours in being looked at by the RQF. So there has been a bit of a sense of panic with some researchers and that has had an impact, so we have had to be …generally aware of what the RQF is doing and how that is going to affect researchers, so that we are able to respond to that increased demand (2205).

Then on being asked whether or not her personal level of involvement with the RQF was typical of those around her (second-round interview item, question one), the same participant provided a keen insight into RQF effects being experienced in the research service office in which she was situated:

…the RQF is putting more of a bureaucratic structure onto research activity, so there is more…awareness from the research community that they need to dot their I’s and cross their T’s…even with ethics and RHD students…researchers are seeing their activities as not something that they engage in, in a removed way – it’s not something that they do in isolation in their lab but it’s actually something that is part of the university community. That has sort of brought them out and more discussions are taking place and…therefore it has generated a lot more volume of work for the research office (2205).
Similar themes such as those appearing in the above quotation were picked up in participant responses regarding major changes to RMA work, as presented in Chapter 6.

Most of the other interviewees of this staffing subgroup were generally undertaking a watching brief, with no direct involvement with the RQF (2202, 2203, 2208, 2213, 2226, 2227, 2229); or they were working through what advice to give to researchers to increase granting success rates via the new RQF framework (for example, the inclusion of expected ‘research impact’ in grant applications) (2205, 2222). Also for some there was an amount of RQF related work activity generated by the data capturing, modeling and reporting processes, given grants-related information was a large part of the data being processed.

To the second item (Q4), the responses either indicated no expected role for this staffing subgroup with respect to RQF post-implementation (particularly in instances where dedicated staff had been appointed to take carriage of RQF processes) (2208, 2227, 2229), or ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’ interviewees gave examples of some of the (limited) types of RQF-related activities they would be involved in. These included: advising researchers on how best to present impact in their grant applications (2222); providing increased levels of data input of granting information (2203, 2205); or working with researchers with the aim of increasing external funding (2213). Of note, one of the responses from this staffing subgroup concerned the flow-on effects on their institution’s focus on strategic research strengths, which were already established and were expected to be reinforced (and rewarded) by the RQF policy framework. Specifically, this support would be reflected in: the operation of internal grant schemes; the advising and training of researchers; and internal policies and management strategies designed to support research concentration (2226).

RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)
Similar to the questionnaire findings reported in Chapter 6 and the responses reported earlier in this chapter regarding RQF impacts for research students, interviewees from this staffing subgroup indicated they were, for the most part, keeping a watching brief on RQF developments pending the release of policy detail as to the treatment of HDR students under the new framework. The lack of policy detail at the time of interview prevented the three ‘RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)’ participants from envisaging their role in the RQF post its implementation.

RMA (Ethics)
Interviewees of this staffing subgroup reported no direct role in the RQF preparations, although the more senior may have been appointed to their university’s RQF steering committee or
related subcommittees. The position of this subgroup in relation to the RQF was put neatly by one of the interviewees of this staffing subgroup:

I have been an observer, not involved in (the RQF preparations), I am in the office for research but I have a regulatory role, I do not have a prospective role and I am not directly involved in internal planning for it but I am in contact, daily contact, with people who are… (2104).

Interviewees with responsibilities in ethics expected to have no future role in the RQF, with two commenting on the developing RQF (given ethics was not an indicator included in the anticipated RQF policy design) being a lost opportunity to have placed research ethics at the forefront of evaluations of research quality (2106, 2124).

These findings add weight to those reported earlier (see questionnaire items 53, 59, 61 and 62) in this chapter, that there was a significantly deeper and more extensive involvement with RQF preparations by participants who were ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’ and ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’, than by those who were ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’; with even less preparatory involvement by those whose main responsibilities were in the areas of Graduate Studies/Graduate Students or Ethics. As previously indicated, the heightened involvement of the first two staffing subgroups can be explained by the strategic nature of the RQF and its expected impact, as well as by the data management and reporting requirements of the new policy. The ‘expected’ RQF post-implementation involvement intensity for each staffing subgroup was also found to be similar to that described in the interview responses by participants who were involved in initial RQF preparations.

What has not been mentioned previously in the discussion of staffing subgroups’ involvement with RQF preparations, are details about the individuals appointed to work directly on the RQF, such as dedicated ‘RQF officers’ or the small number of people with direct responsibility for policy and policy related matters (captured in this study in the staffing subgroup ‘RMA (Policy/Quality/RQF/Projects)’. Whilst a number of these dedicated RQF (and research policy) staff took part in the study, it was not possible to draw attention to their responses as a group or individually without the possibility of identifying them. Suffice to say, it was a given that staff in these roles were fully engaged with RQF preparations at the time of interview.
Reflections on Different Approaches to the RQF

As the first-round interviews progressed and as the questionnaire findings were analysed, it became obvious from the responses received that there were very different approaches taken in relation to RQF preparations by respective universities. Whilst such differences were in part expected, given the researcher had identified this in her review of university preparations for the RQF (as drawn from all Australian university websites during the period March to May 2006 - see Appendix L), what became evident in the interviews were some marked variations in RQF involvement across the same staffing subgroups by university. Specifically, some participants (and/or their units/offices) were being fully informed of RQF developments and a number of them were fully involved in RQF-related activities. Conversely, their equivalents in other universities were not similarly involved in RQF deliberations or preparatory activities in their institution.

Given this developing understanding, a follow-up question was posed in the second-round of interviews to elicit participant perspectives on the perceived differences in RQF involvement by research services staff in general, and their RMA peers across the sector. The question, as detailed in Table 8.1, did not appear in the original second-round interview question schedule (which had been promulgated at the time of consent to be interviewed), therefore participants were given the choice of whether or not to answer it at interview.

All 34 second-round interview participants elected to address the additional question. Their responses were transcribed along with all preceding interview material, which was initially coded by interview question in QSR.NVivo 8. The answers to this additional question were analysed for common themes and/or response categories. The responses provided examples of a number of organisational and individual dynamics behind the perceived and actual variations of research services staff involvement in, and awareness of, RQF preparations.

The resultant findings are presented as a range of factors, commencing with a focus on the capacity of the individual staff member to be involved with the RQF, as identified by participants. The reported factors represent amalgams of participant responses, illustrated by quotations drawn from the item responses. The eight factors which have emerged from the analysis are: ‘Individual Capacity’; ‘Workload Constraints’; ‘Degree of Role Segmentation’; ‘Organisational Capacity’; ‘Strategic Positioning and Managerial Involvement’; ‘Organisational Culture’; ‘Policy Evolution’; and ‘Information Privileging’. The underlying proposition in the reporting of these findings, is that there would have been a greater likelihood of an ‘evenness’ in the levels of involvement of research service offices and their staff in the RQF across the
sector, if not for one or more of the eight factors identified from the interview responses. In this explication of findings, consideration is also given to the RQF’s early stage of policy evolution at the time of study.

**Individual Capacity**

Personal involvement in RQF preparations by individual staff members may have been constrained by imposition of limitations. In the examples given, such limitations included: a lack of inbuilt capacity in the individual staff member and/or their respective conditions of employment (as in there was no developmental capacity provided in the job descriptions); work environments which were not proactive in staff development; and/or a lack of staff within the research office with backgrounds in areas other than mainstream general administration, thereby potentially reducing cross-fertilisation of ideas and understandings.

These insights may shed light on the earlier surveyed findings of significance (reported in the first section of this chapter) in which participants who were on lower salaries; or who were not university qualified; and/or identified themselves as having a ‘University Administration’ as opposed to a ‘Research Services’ career alignment, were most likely to report lower levels of knowledge of the RQF than those with reverse characteristics. In contrast, also interviewed were highly specialised research services staff from fields of expertise that may or may not have crossed over into the RQF policy domain. In such instances, although the interviewee/s may not have been involved with the RQF directly, there was an indication that they undertook to keep themselves informed of the policy as it unfolded. For example, some of the ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’ participants who reported low RQF involvement levels in the previous section, indicated at interview they were keeping a watching brief on the unfolding RQF.

**Workload Constraints**

The key issue under this heading was the workload volume of research services staff members, and associated prioritization of day-to-day operations. In the words of one interviewee:

…”if someone asked me for input into the RQF, and I am sure they have, I just do not have the capacity. I mean I have just come out of a major grant round where I have been working 12-16 hour days…I know it (the RQF) is relevant to my position and if I have the capacity to have some input maybe I would…” (2222).

When operational workload has been raised as a factor that has impacted on their involvement with RQF preparations, typically the participant has indicated that responsibility for the RQF
has been tasked to particular person/s or a group/team, as discussed in more detail in the subsection entitled ‘Organisational Capacity’ below.

**Degree of Role Segmentation**

For this factor the key issues raised in the responses were whether or not the responsibilities of the research service office was structured in a segmented way, and how those segmented areas (namely separate staffing subgroups) related to each other. In relation to the RQF, the higher the segmentation of roles within the research service office or related unit, the more likely that responsibility for RQF preparations was restricted to a person, area or group. The degree of segmentation in an operational sense was seen to be dictated largely by organisational size and work volume, but styles of communication (and knowledge dissemination) across the internal groupings (identified as staffing subgroups within this thesis) were attributed to the management approach taken. For example:

…we have got (staffing subgroup) people here …but they do not necessarily know what each other is doing and that is just dependent on the different Directors we have had. We have a Director at the moment who is into information sharing, so we are learning a lot more about each other’s functions; the previous Director who we had treated everybody as discrete units…there was very little information sharing within the office… (2205).

**Organisational Capacity**

Organisational capacity was also raised as a factor behind how the RQF change was resourced within a university. Some universities made significant investment in preparing for the RQF, whilst others did not have the resource capacity to do so (or chose not to make high levels of investment for other reasons). In the words of one interviewee:

…I think people are still finding their way a little bit. Someone this morning was talking about one university that said that they had this team of people appointed and one was the director of (the RQF) and …when they spoke to them, it was someone who was the executive assistant to one of the senior professors who had taken it on as an additional role. So I think that people are just sort of finding their way a little bit and they might be identifying the fact that we do need to put a lot of energy into this (the RQF), but it has not actually meant additional resources (2215).

Some research service offices were seen to have the in-house capacity to take carriage of the RQF, whilst others did not. Or in some cases, regardless of capacity, a choice was made to resource the RQF outside the research service office as discussed under the next subsection.
‘Strategic Positioning/Managerial’. Organisational locations with responsibility for research management information were also noted as a factor behind the level of involvement of research services staff in RQF preparations, with the examples given that included: within a research service office; or a planning unit; or a quality unit. The organisational connections between the management of research information and library managed information were also raised as an issue.

**Strategic Positioning and Managerial Involvement**

The location of a university within a specific university grouping was also raised as a factor bearing on RQF involvement levels. In particular, the effect of the respective university grouping’s positioning strategies and the organisational level of managerial involvement in the RQF within the university. For example:

Some (universities) have seen the organisation of the RQF as a separate issue rather than a ‘research service’ issue, and so it’s been handled by a group directly from the VC (2225).

And from another interviewee, an observation about differences in staffing involvement in RQF preparations across university groupings:

…it is very strange and I would have thought that DEST had been keen to ensure that people in different sorts of major groupings were involved in all steps along the way. I think…a lot of it comes down to communication and although DEST thinks “Well ok we have got representatives from (each of the university groupings)”, they are assuming that that information will filter through and possibly it’s not. Again it depends on the strategies being engaged at…each university level…and even across (particular university groupings). I can see that some are doing it better than others as far as sharing the learning and the information and sort of providing updates about what is going on… (2216).

A further consideration under this heading (and reviewed in part under the subsection entitled ‘Organisational Culture’ below) which was raised at interview was the relationship dynamic between the: Director/Manager of a research service office; senior executive (either a DVC or PVC); and/or the VC or senior executives from non-research related portfolios. For example:

…I have worked in …different universities and in each one…there has been quite different relationships between the (senior research executive/s) and their Director/s and quite different levels of trust…I think that that has a lot to do with the involvement that the
(senior research executive) is prepared to give to the research office…I think so much of this is personality driven (2227).

Organisational Culture

‘Organisational Culture’ is a term open to wide interpretation. For the purpose of this inquiry, it is used to capture a range of issues as cited by participants, which may have influenced respective universities’ organisational decision-making about which staff were informed of the RQF change process, and who was given carriage of RQF implementation and so on. Such issues include: the impact of an organisation’s historical practices or development (for example a large Go8 university arguably has much different cultural dynamics influencing their decision making and policy change or implementation style, than say a small regional university); shifting organisational power dynamics (such as examples given at interview of ongoing oscillation between centralisation and decentralisation of research administration functions); how the research services role is perceived by the individual incumbent; plus, more broadly, what the purpose of the research service office (or administrative areas in general) is, according to a university’s management and academic researchers. In short, what the operating parameters (whether overtly defined or not) are for this group as a whole, may have had an overarching effect on levels of staffing involvement with RQF policy preparations.

Policy Evolution

The above six factors that influenced interview participants’ involvement should be viewed in relation to the study’s timing in relation to the RQF’s policy evolution. The questionnaire and interviews occurred during the extended development phase of the RQF. During that period, no university was in a position to execute the actual RQF policy until some six months after the final interview (and indeed three months after the full policy details were revealed, the RQF was formally abolished) (see Appendix K: RQF Policy Development Timeline). Therefore, a number of participants anticipated that when the RQF became formally enacted, a wider group of staff would become involved with it in terms of operationalising the policy through the application of guidelines, administrative systems and related processes.

From this perspective, as the RQF was still in its development phase, in large part the discussions and decisions relating to the new policy were being held at the more senior organisational levels, and had not always ‘trickled-down’ to operational areas. This means that had the study’s data collection occurred during the execution of a legislated RQF, then different participant perspectives in relation to the original questions posed may have been generated. Therefore, whilst the stage of policy evolution is itself a valid factor in explaining why some research services staff were involved in the RQF preparation and others were not, it also points
to a limitation on the findings in this section; a limitation previously identified in the study’s research methodology (Chapter 2).

*Information Privileging*

A further aspect raised in the responses to the added interview question regarding variation of RQF involvement, and not addressed in the above factors, could be described as examples of ‘Information Privileging’. This term is defined here as occurring in situations where information is given out to others at varying speeds or at differing levels of disclosure; thereby resulting in differences in levels of knowledge, and possibly involvement or engagement with the subject matter. This definition encompasses situations in which a degree of sensitivity is required in the timed release of detail. For the RQF, a small number of interviewees highlighted instances where some aspects of RQF-related information were not fully passed on to academic researchers. In the words of one interviewee about the management directed flow of RQF communication to academic researchers:

…how open and above board they are or whether they are still treating it as treading warily to protect the egos of researchers I guess… (2205).

Similarly, one interviewee highlighted the need for research administration to tread warily or sensitively, or to take more of a ‘back-seat’ role in the university’s RQF preparations, given the RQF’s direct and personal impact on researchers:

…I do remember a comment by (senior Faculty) …“Well how would you feel if you were told by the research office…that you were doing a bad job and that you were not ‘research management active’?” and you know as to why and that came from someone like me as a messenger. So I think that is why, academics have tried to handle it a bit more in some cases… (2233).

One last aspect under this heading was a small number of instances where interviewees were not being informed or involved in the RQF, despite wanting to be:

…we have got lots of people at the operational level, like myself, who really have no idea of everything that is going on in detail, as there has been no opportunity for engagement…people resist because there is no opportunity for engagement…they can talk a lot about how important it is and how we need to pull together and we need to do this – that is great but it does not do enough for me… (2123).
These eight emerging factors together offer a composite picture of all perspectives gained at interview. Not all of these factors would have necessarily been a determinant in the organisational approach to the RQF’s preparations (or related staff awareness levels) within each participant’s respective workplace. Further, it cannot be assumed from these findings that the composite provided has captured all possible factors at play – particularly given only one actor perspective has been sought. Given these parameters, the above material provides the groundwork and signposts for future research into policy enactment and related decision-making in universities, ideally involving multi-actor perspectives and perhaps differing stages of policy evolution.

PERCEPTIONS OF FUTURE RQF EFFECTS

In the second interview, participants were asked to imagine a future scenario in which the RQF had been in effect for a 10 year period and to discuss what: research administration; university research activity; and their university, would look like in the year 2017 (Q6). The responses were entered into QSR.NVivo 8, analysed for common categories and then coded to same. The findings are presented by response categories grouped under the three components referred to in the interview item.

Research Administration

Four themes emerged from the interview discussions regarding a future research administration, namely: ‘Automation’; ‘Specialisation’; ‘Integration’ and ‘Professional Recognition’. Of particular interest was the interrelatedness of these four themes, as will be shown later in this subsection. A fifth category emerging from the responses related to the expected rise in the importance and profile of ‘Research Integrity’.

Automation

Of the 30 interviewees who provided a future scenario for research administration (four were not comfortable with making predictions in this area largely because of the unknown, but had experienced and always expected, further government policy shifts and changes), 11 indicated that their research service offices would be more automated and that paper-based research administration would become largely redundant.

Drawing on these responses both individually and collectively, a possible future scenario emerged whereby administrative processes would be further streamlined and computer driven or automated (2104, 2202, 2211, 2215, 2228, 2234); while for some, the responsibility for research administration data input would be devolved down to the individual researcher and/or
research student (noting that for some universities this was already the case). There would be larger and more systematised data-warehousing and repositories (2220, 2225) and greater standardisation of data collection processes across the sector (2218), thereby allowing greater benchmarking, for example (2130). Of note was that in the forecasted scenario of increased incidences of electronic lodgements of grant applications, one interviewee indicated that such changes may result in ‘…less scope for our current nurturing, involvement and intervention that happens with hard copies’ (2225).

Others indicated that information and reporting requirements would increase, resulting in research administration becoming according to one interviewee: ‘very much data driven’ (2215). Most of the responses under this category which point to enhanced automation, saw a concomitant reduction in the general administrative tasks being undertaken by centralised research offices, and a subsequent increase in specialisation (as discussed in more detail in the next subsection). For example:

I would see that a great many of the routine processes that offices of research are currently responsible for would be automated and that offices for research would be staffed by mostly higher level, very strategic thinking people whose job would be to help researchers find money and collaborations, and be much less involved in just administering things. So it would be about facilitation, management, development, rather than straight administration – I do not know if that is how it will work out, but that is certainly what I would like to see (2231).

Specialisation

Just over a third of those interviewed mentioned some form of specialisation in research administration ranging from the very basic ‘post office and data deliver’ (2222), to the expectation of ‘additional experts’ being brought in, for example:

…it will probably involve a few more experts. They would be seeking people who can actually …spend more time writing proposals or editing proposals (2203);

…and in the UK they actually appoint people to write portfolios for the RAE and …people who make sure that every spare space is utilised to its most efficient capacity to explain what they have been up to so I think one thing is that we are definitely going to have far more people supporting just the RQF in a research management office… (2216).
Some perceived a mixture of skill sets and organisational forms and the value of a focus on development,

… I think there will be two kinds, one of which will be the big traditional kind which will only be sustainable in very large organisations and then there will be small nimble research offices, which will actually be barely recognisable I think. They will be half and half business development people and people doing the follow-up and follow-through on stuff after it’s funded, but it will be across the board. I think you will have a small integrated team of case manager type people who go out and actively… chase up funding and whatever else across the board from research grants, to consultancies, to tenders, to contract research, to anything really that brings in money; and it will operate much more like a business development office then a research office as it currently exists (2226);

…what I would like to see is that we have a far more proactive role so it’s not research administration; it is research development… we have a partnership with the academic community about liaising with industry…basically you have an academic who understands some business concepts and understands the need to have a research manager sitting alongside in a total partnership in funding (2119).

A small number of participants commented on the degree of specialisation evolution and proactive research development being constricted, or negatively impacted upon, by levels of bureaucracy and government regulatory frameworks:

What I suspect is going to happen is that we are going to get regulated and more regulated as public scrutiny about research increases. So I think that we will be undertaking far more compliance related activity than being proactive… it’s becoming so regulated (2119).

I think one of the changes…is that there will be more focus on helping high-performers. At the moment my office, and I think most other offices, will assist whoever comes for help and you never refuse to help people because if you do not, they complain. What that means, however, is that the poor performers and the brilliant performers get the same level of service and often it’s skewed in the wrong direction. The poor performers take and need more of your time and that is not necessarily going to provide a return to the university, so I think if the RQF continues it will drive greater focus on excellence and also a greater concentration in those areas of research that the university is really good in. What that may mean for offices of research is that you get a greater specialisation, so you might be more
likely to have people who help the medicos and people who help the social sciences (for example), rather than just people who help anybody (to) prepare grants… (2231).

Consideration was given by some as to the impacts of internationalisation and/or the competition for resources and funding:

It will be a lot more efficiently driven, dollar-based because the whole of the university sector will be much more dollar-based and market sensitive. We will also be much more globally operating, so (there) will be a lot of cultural elements included to make the whole thing a lot more colourful, but with a lot more dimensions to it. Which then of course applies to the staff dealing with these things – we will have to have a lot more training behind them in a) they have to be financially sensitive and capable, b) they have to be more internationally out-looking and more sensitive to the various dimensions that that brings with it (2209).

…but I think there will be even greater separation between the haves and the have-nots and probably a lot more competition to get into a research administration role... (2228).

Some interviewees saw specialisation perhaps dictating, or being dictated to, by organisational structural changes – particularly the division between centralised and decentralised research support functions as demonstrated in the following two perspectives:

I do not think central administration will be as important, I think that …research development will be the strong point because of the competitive market and I think that you will have more research support staff at the (academic unit) level rather than at the central level. I think that will be the major change and I think that will be a change for the better, so that you can work with researchers more hands-on (2229).

…we will probably still be a centralised research administration area and we have just recently got into research development and having research development officers who are working with groups in a strategic way to try and…assist the groups and research centres and centre directors to think strategically about how to plan their research in a cohesive way, instead of everybody going off and doing their own thing (2208).
Integration
Under the scenarios put forward, five interviewees expressed the idea that as research administration becomes more specialised and the value-adding and contributive role becomes more widely recognised – RMA work would in turn become more ‘integrated’ into university research activity. Or in the words of one participant – would become ‘the one stop shop for academics’ (2222). Such integration, according to participants, would occur in one or more of the following ways:

Integration with Academic Researchers
Increased bureaucracy of research administration by government policy drivers will result in academic researchers having to rely more on research administrators, thereby increasing the value attributed to this occupational group, resulting in research administration becoming more ‘embedded in the research culture’ (2205).

Integration of Functions – One Stop Shop
…it (becomes) not only the place where the researchers come for advice on what to apply for, how to apply for it, how to value-add their applications, how to diversify it across funding schemes… career development, really the one stop shop for academics, not just information on eligibility, compliance… (2222).

Integration within the University Structure
I think that research administrators will be more core to the organisation then they probably are at the moment (2217).

I would like to see, I would like to hope, I would like to think, that a research office and its people will be in 10 years’ time, slightly more respected and valued by everyone, particularly I suppose I have in mind the top management of the university (2112).

Professional Recognition
Several interviewees discussed the increasing professionalisation (or formalisation) of the role of research administration, either as a result of increased specialisation and/or integration on university research activity, and/or because of the ongoing effects of increasing bureaucratisation and associated accountabilities.
Research Integrity

Last but not least under this subsection, several interviewees referred to the expected rise of research integrity in profile and prominence. For example:

In Australia…we do not have a national office for research integrity, certainly in 10 years’ time we will have that. It’s been said that research integrity is a growth industry, there is some truth in that and I think you will find that there is a much higher profile of research integrity within universities in 10 years’ time because universities are really wary of getting really adverse publicity that comes when people transgress as far as research integrity goes…so yeah I see that as having a greatly increased profile (2124).

Research Activity

There was a range of future (similar and at times competing) scenarios in which research activity in participants’ respective universities was predicted to, for example: ‘be dramatically increased (with) even more diverse funding sources’ (2222); involve a greater sharing of research infrastructure and resources (2213, 2121); involve increased links with industry (2225); involve fewer researchers, bigger research projects and more research assistants (2214); be undertaken by highly active, small teams of researchers (2215); have a greater focus on short-term research (2220); be undertaken by ‘serious’ researchers with ‘fewer dabblers’ (2112); involve increased international research collaboration (2121); and/or be subject to increased regulation of research through quantification and other forms of measurement (2233).

The most frequently cited areas included: greater specialisation, research concentration, research collaboration, and the building/consolidation of niche research strengths (2205, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2119, 2229, 2234). Yet conversely, there were a number of interviewees who indicated that they thought the RQF would have a detrimental effect on research collaboration, particularly:

…cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional… and cross-sectoralising with industry because it’s just all too hard for the (RQF) model to process that… (2216).

Further, along similar lines, a prediction was provided regarding the potential contrariness of academic researchers under the RQF-imposed regime:

…people will tend to go with the concept of clusters of activity, and then I think there will be a little bit of a mutiny and…a return to traditional pockets of academic expression
because there has to be biodiversity in the world and everyone acknowledges the importance of biodiversity in the world, and yet academically we are at the moment trying to smooth it all out…but only the wealthy universities will be able to offer that…(2227).

Other predictions or participant concerns or expectations under this subsection included:

- An increased focus on the management of academic careers (2201).
- Concerns about poaching of research staff (2202).
- Concerns about the ageing academic population and the effects of soon to be retiring ‘star’ researchers on university research performance, exacerbated by the lack of up and coming researchers (2211).
- The need to broaden the DEST definition of what activities are defined as research (2226).
- That there would be greater levels of team supervision and increased ‘regulation tied up around the supervisor/student relationship’ (2201).
- An increased division between research-active and non-research active staff (2218); and/or non-research intensive and research intensive universities (2217, 2106); with the possibility of some universities being forced out of research all together (2210); plus, an increasing need for universities to find a better balance between teaching and research (2130).

Universities

The scenarios put forward regarding what interviewees thought their respective university would look like in 10 years certainly bore the imprint of expected RQF impacts, with variations particularly noticed by participants’ university grouping. For participants from NGU universities (and one IRU participant (2106)) – the predominant concerns were that their university would be pushed back into a ‘teaching-only’ institution under an RQF-led reintroduction of a two-tiered system (2112, 2205, 2210, 2211), whilst possibly building research reputation in small specialist niche areas (2215). Participants from REG universities talked about the consolidation of research (2207), and for one, the expectation of increasing international collaboration (2209). In turn, the IRU participants indicated mixed responses ranging from the more upbeat scenarios in which their university would become more vibrant or more competitive (2203, 2208); to a scenario where less government resourcing was expected, with greater attention paid to alternative funding sources and the need for ongoing professionalisation of the university’s workforce. One IRU interviewee also predicted greater research specialisation in their university following the making of:
…hard decisions about non-performers…not only non-performing individuals but also non-performing research areas more broadly… (2231).

For ATN participants, reduced research funding was a common expected factor in their predictions, as was research selectivity and research concentration; with a continuing focus on industry and practical application (2201, 2213, 2216, 2225). On an expansive note, one ATN participant speculated that their university would have increased numbers of international research students (2234). The increasing staffing dichotomy of teaching versus research (2226) was also raised, as was the focus on electronic networking and international collaboration (2121, 2225). There was also the lament by one ATN interviewee that:

…I think we are becoming like most places…a marketable commodity rather than a public good… (2123).

In contrast, most of the Go8 participants forecast that their respective university would increase in staffing and student size (2222) (with some referring to building and/or parking expansions with the resultant focus being one of sustainability (2218)), and continue to be research-intensive (2217). Some of these responses referred to the effects of poaching of research staff between sandstone universities, and concentrated efforts being made to be at the top of the research pecking ladder (2124, 2132, 2227). The focus on the creation of more innovative teaching modes was also referred to, as were moves to be less dependent on government funding (2223). Of note, the four participants who did not foresee much change occurring for their university as a result of the RQF were from Go8 institutions (2214, 2228, 2220, 2229); two of whom speculated that any changes that did occur would likely be as a result of technological developments (2229, 2220).

These results highlight the differing positions of each of the university groupings to the advent of the RQF, as advanced at the time in the literature and media, and briefly outlined in the opening chapter. It could be argued that the degree of ‘research intensity’ of a university (which to a large extent reflects the nature of the university groupings) was correlated to the assumed or hoped-for level of institutional success under a research assessment mechanism such as the RQF framework. Although not asked directly, such a correlation can be somewhat inferred given the differing manner to which questionnaire participants addressed a hitherto unreported questionnaire item, namely: Q52) ‘Is your university a ‘Research Intensive’ University?’ Participants were asked to select from ‘Yes’, ‘No’ or ‘Unsure’ response categories. The response results as presented in Table 8.18 are ordered highest to lowest ‘Yes’
responses stratified by participants university grouping (this information draws on the earlier reported surveyed responses to question 51 (see Chapter 2, Table 2.3) about which university group participants university belonged to).

Table 8.18 Perspective on Whether Participant’s University is ‘Research Intensive’ (n=188)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Grouping</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NOT SURE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Go8</td>
<td>67 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>67 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRU</td>
<td>19 (76%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>25 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REG</td>
<td>12 (63%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>5 (26%)</td>
<td>19 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATN</td>
<td>15 (41%)</td>
<td>13 (35%)</td>
<td>9 (24%)</td>
<td>37 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER/Not Sure</td>
<td>6 (35%)</td>
<td>5 (30%)</td>
<td>6 (35%)</td>
<td>17 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGU</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>13 (56%)</td>
<td>5 (22%)</td>
<td>23 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>124 (66%)</td>
<td>36 (19%)</td>
<td>28 (15%)</td>
<td>188 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 8.18 indicated that all Go8 participants saw their university as being ‘research intensive’, as did three-quarters of the IRU participants. Therefore, these participants were more likely to indicate an expectation that their university would largely benefit from an RQF regime, as proved to be the case. It is noteworthy, however, that, Go8 participants, by far, spoke more positively in the main than did the IRU participants. Conversely, the opposite finding is shown for NGU participants. Also the majority of ATN participants indicated that their university was not research intensive, or they were not sure. In these cases, NGU participants were perhaps more likely to indicate concern about the possible impacts of the RQF on their university (with the inherent threat of becoming a teaching-only university), with the ATN participants more likely to be concerned about research funding reductions. Both of these response patterns occurred in the aforementioned future scenario responses. In addition, these response patterns by university grouping reiterate participant perspectives and concerns arising from the possible impacts of the RQF, as presented earlier in the chapter.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Participants from the full range of responsibility/salary levels and staffing subgroups were captured in this research. The findings highlighted involvement from the very active to the most passive, providing multilayered insights into the thought-processes and policy learning that occurred in this group; who, for the most part, were at arms-length from the formal government policy deliberations and development. At the time of survey a ‘hunger’ for policy detail was evident, particularly given that a number of participants indicated that they were responsible for educating academic researchers in policy details, or upskilling researchers in effective ‘gameplaying’ under the new policy regime. The ambiguity surrounding the RQF
policy during the study’s data collection phase was evident in participant responses, particularly in their initial reactions to the announced framework.

These findings suggest an uneven involvement of university research services staff with the unfolding of the RQF across the sector. In Australia, most RMA had some knowledge of the RQF, with those reporting higher levels of knowledge more likely to be: university qualified; in the higher salary ranges; with a ‘Research Service’ career alignment; and/or previous experience as an academic. The greater engagement of participants who were either ‘Deputy Directors/Directors’, ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ or ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’ would be expected, given the: strategic implications of the policy event; its requirement for sophisticated data management; and the policy focus on research grant performance.

The main sources of information about the RQF were reported to be in-house through university communications and line managers, or through the accessing of government documentation. For the majority of RMA, the RQF was seen to constitute a very significant change and probably the most significant workplace change in their experience. Most of the interviewees confirmed this, and the range and pattern of their responses highlighted complex interrelationships between the RQF, its advent, and the various aspects of the higher education sector and policy settings. Drawing on these interview responses, it is argued that the RQF was a massive change in policy in terms of the scope of data collection, ranking and accountability (the ‘New Public Management’ phenomenon referred to in the opening chapter). The main shift shown by this study is in the perceived role of RMA, given the emphasis on measurable quality.

Regarding the perceived impact of the RQF, it was anticipated by the majority of participants that it would have a high to very high impact on: their university; the university sector; academics; and research activity. The RQF was expected to have a greater impact on the workloads of ‘Directors/Deputy Directors’ and ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ participants, than on any of the other main staffing subgroups. Female participants were significantly more likely to expect that the RQF would have a higher impact on research activity and research quality, than did the males. Participants with higher levels of knowledge about the RQF policy expected higher policy-related impacts on their workload, than those with little knowledge of the RQF. Those with university qualifications expected a stronger RQF impact on research quality than those without university qualifications. In addition, those on higher salary levels were preparing for greater impacts on their workload than those on lower salary levels.
Of the anticipated resources required to implement and operate the RQF, initial staff training and increased IT infrastructure were the two most cited by questionnaire participants, with additional research services staff seen as the least likely resource to be provided. There was a wide spectrum of implementation challenges foreseen by participants, including: increased workloads and associated resource constraints; the requirement for academics to shift to the new policy paradigm at a number of levels; and the need for sophisticated IT systems and data management. Further, the developmental stage of the RQF policy at the time of survey was particularly telling in participant responses; principally in regard to the challenge of preparing to implement the RQF without sufficient or finalised policy detail.

This area of study tapped into RMA voices and perspectives within a context that revealed that RMA were not passive subjects; but a vital resource when it came to research-related policy design, implementation, enactment and ongoing operation. Participant responses, collectively, provided an outline of the behind-the-scenes work involved in the preparatory stages of a large-scale policy change in universities.

Unlike internally-devised policy changes (even those responding to external conditions), the RQF had strong impetus given a number of push/pull dynamics driving the change. For example, the government was ‘pushing’ to increase research efficiency in universities, whilst the Go8 universities were ‘pulling’ for the policy change to take place, given the potential benefit to that university group over others. Challenges that did remain for RQF implementation according to interviewees, included: workload and resourcing impacts; pockets of change denial or resistance being fed by debates about whether or not the RQF would proceed; the short turn-around between the release of policy detail and the first formal RQF data collection; plus, the personal impacts on academic researchers (in particular on those academics considered to be ‘non-research active’).

The identified depth in the levels of involvement with the RQF by each staffing subgroup in the policy’s preparatory phase were expected to become more similar once the policy had been formally adopted in the workplace; with the findings highlighting the expected roles and activities relating to the RQF from each of the five main staffing subgroups. In turn, ‘Inclusivity’ of all stakeholders in the change process and ‘Communication’ of the changes were the two major response categories derived from the advice given by participants as being the most important areas for universities to consider when bringing in the RQF.

The RQF was seen by some as a catalyst to greater specialisation in the RMA occupational group, leading towards increases in: professional recognition; acceptance by academics and
university management in terms of their value-adding efforts; plus integration of research support work into the fabric of university research activity. This staffing trend has been signposted earlier in Chapter 6 in the findings on change drivers and their effects on the workplace, according to the study’s interviewees. In a similar vein, following his extensive review of the SRA International and NCURA journals dedicated to USA research administration, Campbell (2010) commented on the likely advent of a:

…new breed of professional who will be entirely proactive in identifying and developing new research initiatives as a part of their managing the research portfolio of the institution…The focus of this individual’s work will be on the development of new research, not on the specific faculty or institutional agendas… (and will) be a front line administrator (pp. 46-47).

Shifts in the RMA occupational group towards greater specialisation such as the staffing trend identified above, would ideally result in: increased professional recognition; increased acceptance by academics and university management of the value-adding and contributions made; plus greater integration of research support functions with university research activities. Further research into this workplace dynamic under the RQF replacement, the ERA, would provide insight into any perceived or actual workplace changes, with particular focus on the researcher/research support dynamic. Possible future research directions involving the ERA and research support staff are explored in Chapter 9.

For research activity, the predominant scenario is one of greater research collaboration, specialisation, and concentration on building and strengthening niche areas. However, a number of contrary views from interviewees indicated that the RQF would have a detrimental effect on forms of research collaboration. The future scenarios gathered at interview about the forecasted situation for participants’ universities, appeared to be influenced by the differing expected impacts of the RQF on the corresponding university groupings.

The next and final chapter first overviews the purpose and contribution of this research, and then discusses the key findings and implications arising from each of the study’s six core areas of inquiry.
CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Universities have complex staffing and management structures, yet the academic workforce and their perspectives and activities have singularly dominated the literature. What is known about the workings of universities and the higher education sector has been primarily interpreted and understood through the academic lens of research, and teaching, faculty and discipline. However, this situation is changing; with the dominance of the academic perspective being challenged on a number of fronts and slowly, but with increasing force, this position is coming through in the literature.\footnote{See for example: Allen-Collinson, 2006, 2007, 2009; Conway, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; H. L. Davis, 2012; Deem, 2010; Dobson, 2000; Dobson & Conway, 2003; Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007; Graham, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Green & Langley, 2009; Henkel, 2009; Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009; Jackson & Kile, 2004; S. Jones, et al., 2012; Kirkland, 2005, 2008, 2009; Langley & Heinze, 2009; Macfarlane, 2011; McClaran, 2003; Melnnis, 1998; McNay, 2005; Sebalj, et al., 2012; Sebalj, et al., 2007; Seyd, 2000; Sharrock, 2010; Shelley, 2008, 2010a, 2010b; Small, 2008; Szekeres, 2004, 2006, 2011; Teichler, 2003; Wallace & Marchant, 2011; Whitchurch, 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2009a, 2009b; Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010; Wohlmuther, 2008. All of these citations have been drawn upon throughout this thesis.}

This foundational and exploratory study places the work of research administrators squarely within the landscape of university research activity. It has investigated a relatively unexplored area of central university administration (research services) from the perspective of the staff employed in the area. The 194 research subjects were university research managers and administrators (RMA) based within the centralised research services units of 36 Australian public universities. The participant group drew on university administrators tasked with similar research support roles across the Australian higher education sector. The contribution, significant findings and their implications, and overall conclusions drawn from the study, are discussed in this chapter. In addition, practical applications derived from the study’s findings are discussed, along with suggestions for future areas of research.

BACKGROUND

The success and direction of a nation’s knowledge production is a high-stakes concern for countries and their citizenry. Universities play a large part in the generation of new knowledge through the publicly and privately funded research endeavours of their academic staff. The opening chapter drew specific attention to the competitive nature of publicly funded research, which has become increasingly subject to government-imposed accountability measures, quality frameworks and national priorities. It also drew attention to the need for research into university RMA; argued as a missing element in current understandings of the Higher
Education research dynamic. The study’s primary motivation was to make known the profile, work, and perceptions of RMA based in research service offices in Australian universities.

The first chapter detailed the literature which provided the setting for the study’s research questions and stated aims. During the conduct of this study there was a noticeable increase in the quantity of literature in the area of RMA and in the publication rate; the prevalence of which continues to grow. A similar situation has been reported for higher education literature pertaining to the wider university ‘professional staff’ group (Szekeres, 2011). The literature on RMA and the broader field of university administration has also noticeably shifted during the life of this study, from articles dominated by opinion, commentary and practitioner-focused material, to the presentation of evidence-based research findings. These more recent research articles feature qualitative methods chiefly consisting of interviews and some case studies, with several instances of multi and mixed method approaches.

The most noticeable product of this shift is the appearance of theoretical building blocks which seek to identify, describe and explain the rise in stature of university professional staff; and the interrelated changes to traditional academic/administrator role boundaries. This growing body of work renders visible the relatively untapped university professional staffing dynamic, bringing fresh perspectives and understandings to the field of higher education, thereby challenging current university staffing orthodoxies. The more recent literature published post data-collection was drawn on in the interpretation of the findings. As will be noted in this chapter, a number of key themes and issues appearing in the published research are supported, or are in a similar vein, to those reported in this thesis.

The mixed methods approach used in the study drew on both questionnaire and interview data collected in sequence. The quantitative analyses were primarily descriptive – the two interviews supported collection of further detail and enabled more in-depth analysis on key areas of investigation contained within the questionnaire.

**CONTRIBUTION AND LIMITATIONS**

This doctoral research set out with two specific aims, namely, to conduct research designed to:

1. Attend to the invisibility of the work, profile and operational environment of RMA based in centralised research service offices in Australia.
2. Capture and reflect the voice and perspectives of this group, describing their roles and contributions to the higher education sector.
The resultant study drew on close to one third of centralised research services staff in 36 of 37 Australian public universities, during the period 2006-2007. The findings can be used to inform HE directed policies: university staffing practices; management; and performance achievement. The study has focused on a little known area of Australian university administration in a manner which provides a range of illustrations, ideas, and later in the chapter, an explanatory model of role capacity that can form the basis for future research. Findings are provided in six areas: RMA profile; staffing nomenclature; degree of professional alignment; role; workplace relationships; and policy implementation. Within each of these areas of inquiry, key findings are summarised and implications and applications are presented.

Before drawing out the major findings and implications of this study, it is important to briefly consider its limitations. Perhaps the major limitation is that the information comes from a single source, that of RMA staff in Australian universities. Although hearing the views of a previously silent group provided a necessary balance to this area of study, it should be borne in mind, especially when considering areas where some RMA staff were pointedly critical of researchers, that there is a potential ‘other’ side to the story from researchers and also senior university management.

Other limitations:

- Being overtaken by events – the demise of the RQF and institution of the ERA, and the widespread introduction of ‘professional staff’ nomenclature.
- The absence of non-university qualified participants in the interview data.
- Insufficient sample size outside of the five main staffing subgroups which impacted the analysis of RMA roles.
- The exploratory and qualitative dominant nature of the study, together with the comprehensive scope of the questionnaire overall, lessened the potential for the study’s quantitative findings to be further extended. The questionnaire items were not designed, for example, to form scales. However, the potential for this is now evident from the patterns that emerged in the qualitative data, notably in the area of ‘professional alignment’, and can be addressed in future research.

27 Although beyond the scope of this thesis, recent doctoral research by Zelle (2012) on the impacts of the RQF implementation on Australian academics may provide some of the ‘other’ story, or researcher perspective, particularly with regards to their understandings of the RQF, and its significance or otherwise.
MAIN FINDINGS: IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Demographics, Profile and Gender

Key Findings

The first of the study’s six areas of inquiry yielded insight into the heretofore unknown demographic and profile of the RMA group. It so happens that this study parallels one undertaken at the same time in the UK, thereby providing an opportunity for direct comparison. The staffing and employment characteristics highlighted the serendipitous, as opposed to planned, nature of RMA employment and drew attention to the gendered nature of the studied group. Just under three quarters of this study’s participants were female; a gender proportion which roughly corresponded with the study’s total research population, and that of Shelley’s (2008, 2010b) English RMA study.

The finding that one quarter of participants (who were predominantly female) was not university qualified did not compare favourably with the 14 per cent of non-university qualified participants in the English study, indicating a qualification gap. However, there were similar proportions of higher degree qualification levels across the two participant groups. Male participants were more likely to have university qualifications, and HDR qualifications than the females (comparable patterns occurred in the English data); and these findings were significant. For salary levels, female participants were found to be concentrated at the lower end of the salary scale and the males concentrated at the upper salary levels, with male participants initially appointed to significantly higher salary levels and appearing to move through the salary scales at a much faster rate than the females. In the participant employment patterns, female participants were more likely to have first held a number of university positions outside of research services, before moving to that area of university administration, whereas male participants were more likely to have moved into research services from an area of employment outside of the university sector.

The nomenclature preferences of the participants discussed in the next subsection revealed statistically significant differences, which hinted at gendered differences in workplace identity. Female participants were less likely to have indicated a preference for the title of ‘Manager’ over ‘Administrative Staff’, unless they were postgraduate qualified and already on the upper salary levels; whereas male participants were more likely to choose the title ‘Manager’ over ‘Administrative Staff’, regardless of their qualification or salary levels. This finding perhaps points to an inherent sense of managerial role entitlement or a presumptive claim to higher levels of organisational responsibility by male participants.
Implications and Future Research

The findings in this area are at odds with the virtual silence of the participants on the subject of gender. Gender was neither an overt focus nor a primary component of the theoretical framework. There were no direct questions addressed to the issue, while on the other hand there were opportunities to raise gender as a topic in the open ended and interview questions. The subject of gender inequalities in, for example, salary or promotion, was not raised as a key issue by the participants. Given that the findings reveal apparent inequities in participant salary and appointment levels, educational levels, employment patterns and implied managerial expectations; the relative lack of mention about such issues is surprising, especially as they are clearly evident in other studies that focus on gender, most recently that of Wallace and Marchant (2011).

Wallace and Marchant (2011), in discussing the possible limitations in their study involving 172 female university administrative middle managers, pointed out that gender issues may have been a strong feature in their findings because of the way the survey items had been ‘…framed around respondents’ experience as a female manager…’ (p. 577). However, when considering all research factors involved, they concluded that gender issues had loomed large for study’s participants, noting that the ‘…female administrative managers’ concerns were extensive...’ (Wallace & Marchant, 2011, p. 577).

Some of the concerns raised by the female administrative managers in Wallace and Marchant’s (2011) study were in regard to: workplace discrimination based on gender; an overriding masculine culture embedded in the workplace, with ‘masculine’ management styles and approaches being overly rewarded and encouraged; plus, reports of a ‘…pervasive devaluing of female administrative managers…’ (p. 574). These results highlighted the need for a more ‘…inclusive and collaborative style…’ of management in the workplace (Wallace & Marchant, 2011, p. 576). Drawing on the participant responses, Wallace and Marchant (2011) went on to suggest that workplace ‘invisibility’ (a concept referred to in the opening chapter) experienced by university staff, with the exception of academics, may have more to do with gender and ‘…continued male hegemony…’ in the sector; rather than what they have termed as the ‘academic apartheid’ of Academic versus ‘Other’ (p. 567). Further, the researchers found that together with a lesser noted ‘…status divide with academics…’, this group appeared to be under pressure to adopt a ‘…masculine management style in order to succeed in male power cultures and structures…’ (Wallace & Marchant, 2011, p. 578). They concluded that the female management group had been rendered ‘…doubly invisible in the academy due to being both non-male and non-academic…’ (Wallace & Marchant, 2011, p. 578).
In the Wallace and Marchant (2011) study participants were described as being part of an ‘elite’ group by the researchers – signifying recognition of the disproportionately small percentages of female university administrators in managerial positions, this in itself can introduce a bias. Indeed, the researchers go on to indicate that further research as follow-up to their study should include ‘…female administrative staff at lower levels and also conduct comparisons with males…’ (Wallace & Marchant, 2011, p. 577). Hence, while Wallace and Marchant’s (2011) findings may have had an in-built bias based on the participant group, the opposite can be said for this study which deliberately involved participants from the full salary spectrum, male and female, and the emphasis was much more broader encompassing an extensive set of working relationships and professional understandings.

By contrast, here the emergent emphasis from participants was relationships with academic staff and the nature of their work. It might be offered that the nature of RMA work is dominated by the research story of the institution and the press of expectations about research performance. This is not to say gender does not enter such relationships with academics, specifically, the gap in recognition of RMA work. There was a perception of a devaluing of this work by academics which had strong overtones of perceived gender bias, for example, reference to being treated as ‘office girls’ or ‘secretaries’. Moreover, there were several comments made by female questionnaire participants and quoted in previous chapters that indicated gendered assumptions associated with nomenclature and further intertwined with the issue of two cultures – ‘us and them’.

A very senior female participant who when describing typical workplace relationships with academic researchers, went so far as to suggest a gendered academic apartheid in terms of how her input and those of her staff were viewed in the workplace:

…I come up with suggestions and solutions and methods of doing things and again often that advice is not seen as relevant because I am a general staff member…we are still seen by and large as glorified office girls, we use the word ‘girls’ advisedly, and we are there to do the typing and the photocopying but any sort of recognition that this is actually my expertise is definitely not there (1223).

The above quotation points to potentially untapped gendered issues in Australian university research service offices. Further, the study’s findings on professional stakeholder-regard indicated that female participants were significantly less likely to assume that academics saw them as being members of a profession, than did male participants. Given this, perhaps if there had been a different line of questioning put to participants in the study, then the strong concerns
captured under the rubric of ‘academic apartheid’, for instance, could have been appropriately measured against any ‘unspoken’ gendered concerns, such as those reported by Wallace and Marchant (2011). This would, therefore, have provided a more comprehensive assessment of the factors involved with the ‘invisibility’ of this group and the perceived lack of recognition of their contribution by others.

Consequently, it is suggested that future research work into RMA and/or the wider university professional staff group, has the capacity in its design and intent to provide from the outset a suitable space for female participants, in particular, to voice gender-based concerns or issues. This would help to ensure that greater attention can be directed to the kinds of workplace issues which Wallace and Marchant (2011) identified in their research. This recommendation underscores the concerns raised by Wallace and Marchant (2011) as to the lack of research focus on gender issues in the growing body of literature on university administrative staff (including general, allied, and professional); a point made earlier in a joint article by Sebalj and Holbrook (2009) drawn from this study’s findings on RMA profile.

**Nomenclature**

*Key Findings*

The intention of the study’s second area of inquiry into nomenclature preferences was to investigate the shortfalls in current university staffing terminology from an RMA perspective, and to progress this matter beyond its initial identification and problematisation in the literature. This has been achieved. The study has provided experiential findings which were found to primarily support the concerns raised in regard to nomenclature, as detailed in the study’s literature review. The main findings revealed:

- the negative, divisive and demeaning nature of the term ‘Non-Academic’ – a descriptor which ideally should be removed from the higher education lexicon;
- the inadequacy of the broad descriptor of ‘General Staff’;
- the problematic nature of the ‘Manager/Administrator’ divide, with the added finding of gender and salary effects;
- the need for nomenclature to clearly identify staffing responsibility levels to stakeholders;
- the issue of ‘Administrative’ being suitable nomenclature for those staff at the more junior end of the scale, but seen as devaluing terminology for those at the middle and upper levels of responsibility; and
the overall situation in which no nomenclature has been found to be ideal for all concerned.

Potential solutions to the concerns raised in this subject area would need to take into account the complex and multilayered nature of staffing nomenclature as demonstrated, for instance, in the competing perspectives on nomenclature in relation to the administrative/technical staffing binary. Given this, a conceptual framework of a ‘nomenclature ladder’ has been devised to address the identified shortcomings in university staffing terminology. This ladder uses as its main anchor or reference point the broad descriptor of ‘Professional Staff’, in recognition of the term’s growing acceptance in the Australian and UK Higher Education vernacular. In addition, the ladder potentially provides a framework for career development and a vehicle for status enhancement, thereby addressing the professional developmental needs of this group.

Application – Nomenclature Ladder

The design of the proposed nomenclature ladder takes its cue from the already established academic classification system of ‘Associate Lecturer’, ‘Lecturer’, and so on. This ladder, or ‘Professional Staff Position Classification Scale’, consists of a graded system of titles which indicate increasing levels of responsibility and corresponding salary levels or bands; embedding terms currently in use in the sector within an aspirational framework. Once established for common use, a nomenclature ladder would ensure consistent nomenclature forms across the sector, thereby addressing the confusion of terms apparent in the literature and providing greater clarity to international comparisons in this area of university staffing.

A prototype of the proposed scale which draws on current university staffing nomenclature is presented in Table 9.1 in three illustrative versions as a discussion starter. This table and its contents first appeared in a joint journal article (Sebalj, et al., 2012a, p. 469) drawn from this research. Each of the three scales commence at the most junior position of ‘Trainee/Cadet’ and progress through to the most senior position of ‘Executive’, providing an aspirational nomenclature system encompassed within the broad descriptor of ‘Professional Staff’.

As shown, the first of the four columns in Table 9.1 suggests corresponding Higher Education Worker (HEW) salary bands for each of the five scale steps. The second column describes the first position classification scale (‘Specialisation’), which consists of generic position descriptors shared across each of the three scales. This foundational or generic position classification scale can be tailored for more specific staffing streams or specialisations, providing a level of flexibility in the application of the scale at the local level. Two examples of
how this foundational scale can be applied for administrative (‘Administration’) and technical (‘Technical’) staffing streams appear in the third and fourth columns of Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 Professional Staff Position Classification Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary Band</th>
<th>Specialisation</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Technical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(HEW 10/10+)</td>
<td>Executive (Specialisation)</td>
<td>Executive (Administration)</td>
<td>Executive (Technical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(HEW 8-9)</td>
<td>Senior (Specialisation) Officer</td>
<td>Senior Administrator</td>
<td>Senior Technical Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(HEW 6-7)</td>
<td>(Specialisation) Officer</td>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>Technical Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(HEW 3-5)</td>
<td>(Specialisation) Assistant</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant</td>
<td>Technical Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(HEW 1-2)</td>
<td>Trainee/Cadet (Specialisation)</td>
<td>Trainee/Cadet (Administration)</td>
<td>Trainee/Cadet (Technical)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In line with the study’s findings, the nomenclature of ‘Administrative’ has not been used at the more senior levels of the classification scale. In turn, the nomenclature of ‘Manager’ has not been included in the scales, given that participants on the whole indicated that they preferred this term if they had managerial responsibilities. Therefore, in the situation where a staff member does have managerial responsibilities, it would be appropriate for the term ‘Manager’ and/or ‘Director’ to appear in the incumbent’s job title.

Future Research

Two limitations are apparent in this component of the research study, both of which can be addressed by follow-up research. Firstly, the opinions and perspectives of the RMA participants may differ from the broader population of university administration; therefore, it would be worthwhile extending the above analysis to the wider group. Secondly, ‘Professional Staff’ was not included as a nomenclature option in the study’s questionnaire items, given the term gained prominence a few years after the study’s data collection phase. It is worthy of note, however, that few participants offered ‘Professional Staff’ as an option. Consequently, future nomenclature research would necessitate its inclusion, particularly in order to assess whether or not its adoption achieved, in the longer term, a shift in stakeholder perspectives about those university staff members who are collectively referred to by this term.
Shortfalls in Professional Alignment and Stakeholder Recognition

Key Findings
The third arm of the study’s inquiry comprised an investigation into the group’s professional alignment. It is clear from the documentary analysis and literature review provided in the opening chapter, that progress had been made for RMA to be recognised and to operate as a profession and that this movement is part of an international trend in this area. However, significant gaps have been found in the professional alignment of this group in relation to their: professional self-concept; professional characteristics (including the finding that a quarter of participants held no university-level qualifications); relatively low professional membership levels; and, poor uptake of professional development activities. Also apparent was a range of competing descriptions of what the RMA profession is, with mixed understandings of RMA work as being generalist or specialist, or a specialist arm of a generalist function or role. Varying notions of the professionalisation status of RMA were also apparent in the participant group, with perspectives ranging from ‘RMA is not a profession’ to ‘RMA is a specialised profession’.

International Comparisons
There was a marked commonality in the perspectives of the UK research managers and administrators shown in Allen-Collinson’s (2006, 2007, 2009) research, and those expressed in this Australian study. These include the ‘invisibility’ of the work of this occupational group and the lack of profile, acknowledgement, and appreciation of their contribution to institutional research endeavours; by academics in particular. There is also the problematic negative identity as ‘Non-Academic’ or ‘Other’ as discussed in Chapter 4 and in the study’s opening chapter.

Australian university RMA appeared to operate in a much less idiosyncratic manner than their English counterparts. Given the relative ease with which generic statements of responsibilities have been constructed from participants’ brief role descriptions in Chapter 6, there seems to be a commonality in job roles and accountabilities across the sector. It is from this more common operating platform (undoubtedly assisted by the much smaller scale of operations) that Australia may be better placed to build systematically towards a fully realised profession, as previously identified developmental gaps are addressed. However, political will for change in the form of UK government policy development and associated funding can be identified as being likely to significantly support the UK’s progress in this area.

While the activities of professional bodies are more advanced in the USA than in Australia, it has been noted that their associations have attracted only about 20 per cent of the estimated
population of RMA staff, which indicates a professionalisation gap. For the UK, there appears to be a general momentum towards the professionalisation of RMA and the wider university administrative body; a development which has been recognised and fostered by the government. UK government attention is demonstrated, for instance, by: Green and Langley’s (2009) government-funded research on the professionalisation of RMAs in English universities; the focus on the professionalisation of UK university administrative and support staff in government policy papers (HEFCE, 2010); and in the support given for the creation of a CPD Framework for UK HE sector-wide application (AUA, 2009; Whitchurch, et al., 2009), as discussed in Chapter 5. Similar government-led activity is not yet in evidence in Australia.

The Appeal of the Profession

Putting to one side the issues of the professionalisation status of RMA, divergent claims of professional status, and associated gaps in professional stakeholder-recognition, Evetts’ (2003) sociological analysis encourages a deeper understanding of the motivation and appeal behind the quest for profession by a group. In her words:

The ideology of professionalism that is so appealing to occupational groups and their practitioners includes aspects such as exclusive ownership of an area of expertise and knowledge, and the power to define the nature of problems in that area as well as control of access to potential solutions. It also includes an image of collegial work relations of mutual assistance and support rather than hierarchical, competitive or managerialis control… (Evetts, 2003, p. 407).

While evidence for the first part of the statement can be found in this occupational group’s building of expertise and in the application of a growing body of specialist knowledge, the second part has resonance with the broad thrust of participant responses in a number of areas. The idea of enhancing the status of RMA to the point where it can form a complementary partnership with research academics is arguably a key motivator in this group’s movements towards professionalisation. Moreover, the case for effective relationships between academics and administrators has been made in the higher education literature on a number of occasions, as indicated in the opening chapter. The study’s findings, particularly those presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, arguably lead to the overall depiction of an occupational group which is working on defining itself, establishing its raison d’être in the form of growing ‘research support capital’ (Shelley, 2008), and gradually building towards a position from which to comprehensively argue the case for recognition and respect.
For their performance, dedication, skills and workplace contribution to their respective organisations, participants by and large sought recognition and respect, from academic researchers as the primary stakeholder group with whom they interact, and from the institutions they serve. The desire for mutual respect, legitimacy or at the very least – recognition of this group’s contribution to the research process, can be seen in participant perceptions regarding their recognition, or lack thereof, by other stakeholders. The expressed need by participants for mutually respected working relationships with academics in particular, is in direct contrast to ‘us and them’ workplace scenarios which have been described as the academic/administrative ‘putative divide’ (Allen-Collinson, 2007, p. 295). Such themes also appear in participant perspectives of their workplace relations, roles, accountabilities and performance expectations as presented in Chapters 6 and 7, and discussed in more detail in the next two subsections of this chapter.

**Implications and Future Research**

There are limitations in the traditional discourse about what constitutes a profession when measuring an occupational group’s claim to being a profession. Indeed, the concept and definition of ‘profession’ is an oft-contested one (Evetts, 2003). However, in this study the application of Moore’s (1970) professional scale offered a broad indication of professional characteristics. In particular, this scale highlighted the gaps in formal education and shortfalls in training and ongoing professional development among RMA findings akin to those reported for English RMA (Green & Langley, 2009). The findings draw attention to the need for employing institutions and relevant professional associations to concentrate efforts on building the attractiveness of RMA activity as a viable career option, with the aim being to capture and retain an interested and motivated RMA workforce. This is a key OECD recommendation (Connell, 2004) discussed in Chapter 1. Such a need is underscored by the earlier finding in Chapter 3 of predominantly serendipitous or opportunistic, as opposed to planned, movements of individuals into the RMA occupation.

For Australia, it would appear that the next step would be to assess the need and capacity for a RMA professional framework in a similar manner to that recently conducted in England (Green & Langley, 2009). Strategic action to address identified developmental gaps underpinned by an ethos and supply of ongoing professional development would be advantageous, particularly to RMA, and by extension, to researchers and university research activity. The building of a strong professional discourse from multiple directions and inputs would assist in the construction of this profession in a sustainable and self-organising way. Having government and other stakeholder recognition and support, along with related funded enabling policies and mechanisms, would be of further assistance in the professionalisation process.
Government policy action in this area would arguably help to offset the challenges confronting RMA (and the broader professional staff group) in its quest towards professional recognition. Government backing of RMA professionalisation is particularly relevant given the, at times, contested nature of RMA work. This relates predominantly to: the regulatory functions this group performs; the highly feminised nature of the workforce and the need to overcome continuing gender inequality in the workplace; plus, the oft-written hegemony or power imbalance of academics over administrators. The recommendation for government intervention takes its cue in part from Kuhlmann and Bourgeault (2008), who in commenting on Crompton and Le Feuvre’s (2003, as cited in, Kuhlmann & Bourgeault, 2008) comparative study of male and female doctors in both France and the UK, highlighted that: ‘…the state is an important factor in the architecture of opportunity structures for equality…’ (p. 8). However, the authors go on to provide a cautionary note in that any government-led policy intervention in the area of gender and professions requires ‘…complex and context sensitive approaches…’, otherwise new forms of inequality could be the result (Kuhlmann & Bourgeault, 2008, p. 12).

Last but not least, the research insights gained from this component of the study provide an illustration of the potency of researching a subgroup of university administration. It would be of further interest to gauge the professionalisation progress of other subgroups, an example of which is the work by McClaran (2003) on the professionalisation pressures on higher education admissions staff in UK universities.

**Changing Roles and Key Factors Affecting Work Performance**

*Key Findings*

The study’s fourth arm of inquiry pertained to how participants interpreted their roles and accountabilities, and what they paid particular attention to in the performance of their work. Participants’ brief role descriptions were drawn on in the construction of broad ‘Statements of Responsibility’ (Appendix I) for each of the main staffing subgroups, ordered by participant salary levels and reporting lines. Collectively, these responsibility statements are designed to act as useful reference points for the codification of university RMA work functions – an identified necessary step in the professionalisation process.

The findings described busy workplaces of increasing regulatory complexity, ruled by deadlines associated with granting and reporting cycles. This was particularly evident in descriptions of a typical working week by ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’ participants. The prominence of deadlines in RMA work and the problems associated with academic researchers not working within required
timeframes also appeared in UK research, in which deadlines were found to be a ‘...key temporal concern...’ of research administrators (Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009, p. 148). Common areas of participant focus in terms of their performance expectations and accountabilities were identified in the following areas: efficiency improvement; service and facilitation; the effective support of university research activity (the expressed aim of which in the main was the enabling of the achievement of research performance expectations and outcomes at both the individual researcher and institutional level); work accuracy; and the achievement of regulatory compliance. A key theme in the marked focus on efficiency found in participant responses was the understanding that the more productive, facilitative and efficacious they were in the conduct of their role, the more productive and less frustrated with bureaucracy would be researchers and research students. The main performance challenges appeared to be the management of RMA workloads, particularly given shortfalls in RMA staffing resources, and the achievement of effective workplace relationships with researchers.

In addition to providing a snapshot of the operating environment that exists in research service units, the findings from this inquiry brought attention to three particular points of interest. First, the changing nature of research support roles; second, the service orientation of RMA; and third, key issues affecting RMA work performance. The remainder of this subsection is concentrated in these three areas.

**Changing Roles**

As mentioned earlier, participants indicated that research service roles were changing, particularly as a result of the increasingly complex nature of the RMA operating and regulatory environment, paralleling the situation previously described for USA research administrators (Hansen & Moreland, 2004). Six key drivers affecting changes in RMA roles were identified by participants. These findings are for the most part an advance on the five key drivers of change previously identified by Kirkland (2008), which were subsequently argued to have led to the emergence of RMA as a 'global profession' (Kirkland, 2009) as discussed in the opening chapter. The six key drivers according to participants were:

- Government Policy Drivers and Increased Regulatory Compliance;
- Quality Assurance, Accountability Mechanisms and Increasing Reporting Requirements;
- Increased Work Volume and Associated Workload/Resourcing Impacts;
- Shifts in RMA Role (Specialisations) and Increased RMA Performance Expectations;
- Increased Research Competition and Changing Researcher Behaviour; and
- Technological Advances and Increased Online Processing.
The cumulative effects of these change drivers has been the move of RMA work – most noticeably at the more senior management levels – from being predominantly reactionary, traditional forms of administration; to more strategic, policy-orientated, facilitative roles with an increasing emphasis on research development. The recent announcement of the creation of a Research Development Special Interest Group (SIG) by ARMS (ARMS Executive, 2013a), being a case in point. Similar changes have been found for RMA in English universities, with the recognition of an evolutionary shift in the university research support role being a key facet of Shelley’s (2008, 2010b) research findings.

Shelley (2008, 2010b) examined interviews, longitudinal documentary analyses of RMA job advertisements (2001 – 2006), and changes in professional development offerings by ARMA over an extended period of time; finding that RMA roles were increasing in complexity, diversity and specialism. Her work showed increases in entry-level qualification requirements, most noticeably the prerequisite of a PhD (also identified in this study), and dramatic increases in salary levels for senior RMA from 2001 onwards (Shelley, 2010b). When taken into account as a whole, Shelley’s (2010b) research pointed to a greater number of RMA specialist roles and a blurring of the functions between academic managers of research and high-ranking RMA; thus giving rise to changes in job boundaries between academic researchers and the more senior research support staff. Along these lines in summing up some of the participant sentiment, Shelley stated that:

The historical view of RMAs as people who just worked on a partial element of the research process had shifted to recognising that some senior research managers now managed their institution’s research… (2010b, p. 51).

Shelley examined the cumulative effects of the RAE on the roles and career trajectories of RMA and the interface between RMA and researcher roles. The study reported in this thesis examined some similar ground in terms of the RQF, but it captured a point in time in which shifts in the RMA role were being viewed just prior to the nation-wide enactment of this policy providing a novel perspective and dynamic context for the study of RMA roles, activities and understandings.

Service
Over half of all questionnaire participants specifically referred to their role as one of ‘service’ to researchers and/or research students, in their responses to questions on workplace performance and accountability expectations. Service orientation such as that demonstrated in this and other
areas of the study’s findings is a fundamental dimension of the RMA/researcher relationship, with arguably broader institutional implications. Hall-Ross, identified this in reference to the research administrator/research scientist relationship in the context of how to improve its efficacy, noting that the relationship is a ‘…key variable in determining the success of an organization’s research endeavours…’ (1990, p. 21). Hall-Ross’ four recommended guidelines for research administrators (noting the American terminology for RMA) in terms of optimising their role, was for them to:

1. Maintain a service orientation toward the organization in general and the research scientists in particular…
2. Remain flexible…
3. Promote free and complete communication…
4. Ensure the primary goal of all facets of the organization is the furtherance of the research objectives… (1990, p. 22).

The application of these guidelines was seen as necessary to ‘…promote productive relationships with researchers and, thereby enhance the progress of research…’ (Hall-Ross, 1990, p. 22). This was also a concern put forward by a participant in regard to the RMA occupational group becoming a profession in its own right, in lieu of the perceived need to retain a service orientation:

…. I just hope… we do not think that research administration is actually bigger than the research because I think we are at the blunt end and our job is to support and facilitate the researchers because the real pointy end is the research itself, I think we need to…keep a mindset that we need to be servants to the actual researchers (1115).

In a similar vein to the above quotation, Vargas & Hanlon (2007, p. 45) stated that ‘Research administration as a field was developed out of the researcher’s need for service…’). They go on to say that whilst the service aspect remains a large part of the research administration role – leadership is a growing responsibility for this group. The authors use the definition of ‘to serve’ as being: ‘…to be of assistance to, promote the interests of, fight for, or aid, another…’, adding that such interpretation indicates a ‘…more noble purpose, and a sense of responsibility to others…’ (Vargas & Hanlon, 2007, p. 47). Indeed, Krauser (2003) argued that in order to show leadership, research administration must first provide competent service.
Key Work Performance Issues

When describing what they were mostly striving to achieve in the performance of their work and what they felt most accountable for, two overarching participant response patterns emerged. On the one hand, there were those participants who felt their work was respected, valued and appreciated, with indications of positive working relationships with academic researchers – a situation which can be described as comprising ‘Productive Workplaces’. Conversely, there were those who felt their work was undervalued and/or their efforts thwarted, and therefore, their performance or potential contribution was stymied or hampered. The latter responses pointing to what can be described as ‘Contested Workplaces’, in which participants experience difficulties and challenges involved with the conduct of their roles and responsibilities.

Participants also indicated that they would be more effective in their work if academic researchers were better informed of RMA work functions and responsibilities, in particular, the regulatory compliance role they perform. Such understanding could lead to greater collaboration between the two staffing groups; a process ideally underpinned by a managerially supportive and ‘compliance friendly’ organisational culture. Along similar lines, Lagor (2007) in research comprising two case studies of senior university administrators in newly created faculty positions, found that the incumbents needed to be supported by management and that their roles and responsibilities be ‘…clearly understood and recognised…’ by others in the workplace, in order for them to be able to perform their work effectively (p. 146).

Further, this same study found that the incumbents’ demonstrated ‘…skills and expertise and use of their knowledge and understanding…’ in the application of their role, also played a part in how others perceived their work (Lagor, 2007, p. 158). Participants in the Australian study likewise indicated that they were more effective in their role when academic researchers recognised or appreciated their expertise and sought, or at the very least, valued, their input. The subsection on workplace relationships later in the chapter explores these and related issues in detail.

HDR Participants: Characteristics and Perspectives and Future Research

This study found a number of significant differences pertaining to the subgroup of HDR qualified participants. For example, HDR qualified participants were significantly more likely to assume that academics held them in professional regard, than participants of any other level of qualification (although this result becomes less clear if the HDR participant was also a former academic). It was also found that HDR qualified participants were significantly more likely to indicate a ‘Research Services’ (RS) career alignment, than participants at any other
level of education. HDR qualified participants were significantly more likely to indicate that they least preferred to be known as a ‘University Administrator’ than of the other nomenclature options given in this study, compared to participants at any other level of education. HDR qualified participants with an ‘RS’ career alignment were also significantly more likely to indicate a ‘strong’ professional self-concept, than those with any other level of education or who had indicated a ‘University Administration’ career alignment. In short, there are discernible and at times significant differences in the profile, employment, and professional characteristics of HDR qualified participants.

Additionally, a small number of HDR qualified participants indicated better working relationships with academics because of their research qualifications and experience, whilst others reported that their PhD qualification made no difference to the interactions with academics, and that their advice tended to be ignored and/or contribution downplayed. By comparison, in a recent study about how HDR qualified professional staff (n = 32) from an Australian university applied their research training and related skills in the workplace, Berman and Pitman found that a number of the participants indicated that their ‘…experiences as postgraduates, postdocs and/or lecturers gave them credibility and validity, respect and status in the eyes of their academic colleagues…’ (2010, p. 165).

Berman and Pitman (2010) also found that HDR qualified participants were able to offer a comprehensive list of ways in which their research skills training had aided them in their work, and/or had enabled them to perform at high levels. Although this current study did not seek this type of information – a small number of HDR qualified participants indicated that they obtained a high degree of satisfaction from their work because they were able to concentrate their efforts into research areas which were in their own personal discipline area, thereby allowing them to facilitate or add value to a faculty’s research performance, for example. Several senior RMA participants also indicated that their HDR qualifications and/or previous employment as an academic helped them to be accepted by the more senior academic researchers.

Given these findings, future investigations in this area would benefit from research instrumentation designed to explore the similarities and differences between HDR qualified participants and those at other levels of educational qualification. For example, are HDR qualified participants treated differently by other stakeholders compared to those who are not HDR qualified? If there is a difference, what form does it take? What are the contributing factors behind the finding that HDR qualifications have not made a difference for some participants in terms of their working relationships with academic researchers but it has for others? Is organisational culture a factor, for example? Or does it have to do with an
incumbent’s previous experience as an academic? What levels of professional regard do other academics have for former academics who take on main stream/specialist administrative roles – particularly those who are not in leadership positions?

Other related questions to be asked are, why have some universities started to require HDR qualifications for RMA positions? Is this a trend in other professional staff subgroups? Finally, given the previously reported finding that the majority of HDR qualified participants who have started working in a research services position in the last five years (prior to the study’s questionnaire) are former academics – what are the reasons for this shift across traditional staffing boundaries, and are similar shifts occurring in other areas of university administration?

**Workplace Relationships: Interconnectivity and Engagement**

*Key Findings*

The fifth area of the study’s inquiry drew attention to the perceived lack of recognition of the role, contribution and value-adding efforts and/or capacity of RMA by academic researchers. This was despite the strong sense of interconnectedness between RMA work and academic research activity arising from participant descriptions of their work activity, performance and accountability expectations, and workplace relations. Shelley also described the phenomenon of interconnectedness, as follows:

> The RMA field can be described as a structured system of social relations, individuals and other societal groupings, all of which co-exist in structural relation to each other. It is a social space where research is supported, with the most senior research managers developing research policy and strategy and research administrators supporting them in a variety of ways, each RMA occupying a different position… (2010b, p. 53).

The connectedness between RMA work and the work of others was clearly evident in participant responses to a question on recommended personal characteristics (reported in Chapter 3) for staff in research support positions. Essentially, participants placed a premium on people skills or soft skills, such as: the ability to communicate and listen well; to have good interpersonal skills; the ability to negotiate; as well as the ability to work in a team. Having a sense of humour was also a regular feature in the responses. Whitchurch identified a focus on ‘building communicative relationships and networks’ as being more ‘significant than the observance of organisational boundaries’ for professional staff in the carriage of their work (2007b, p. 9).
In addition to the notion of workplace interconnectivity, there were two key findings drawn from the questionnaire responses regarding participant workplace relationships. Firstly, participants described their working relationships with academic researchers (a stakeholder relationship which garnered the most participant response by far of any other group) as being ‘satisfactory’ or positive when one or more of the following conditions applied:

- When their input was valued by those they work with;
- When they had a purpose for working or at the very least were able to be productive in their efforts;
- When they were able to make a difference in the workplace;
- When they were engaged in meaningful, rewarding work; and/or
- When they worked with interesting people in a way that was intellectually stimulating.

Of note, these same five conditions or themes appeared in participant descriptions of satisfactory working relationships with research students.

Secondly, differences were found in the level of engagement of academic researchers (and in some instances, research students) with RMA work-related processes and in researchers’ recognition of RMA roles, their input, and expertise, plus the actual and/or potential contributory facets of the research support function provided by RMA. Together, these two areas of findings demonstrate the importance of academic research engagement with RMA and RMA work activity.

**Level of Researcher/RMA Engagement**

As reported in the previous subsection, positive Researcher/RMA workplace relationships, at least from the perspective of participants, requires a level of engagement by the academic researcher/research student. This engagement can be seen to be ranging from ‘Thin’ to ‘Thick’. Drawing on earlier participant responses, ‘Thin’ engagement can be said to have occurred in situations: where a participant’s work is not appreciated; when a participant’s capacity to contribute is perceived to be thwarted; and/or, when researchers are not complying with RMA-sponsored information requests, deadlines or forms of regulatory compliance. On the other hand, ‘Thick’ engagement describes situations where: the participant’s input, advice or expertise is recognised, supported, and/or appreciated by others; researchers/research students are ‘compliant-friendly’, namely through such actions as timely provision of required information or the meeting of set deadlines; and also where participants’ contributive potential to the research process is valued, enabled, or fostered by researchers, research students (and
indeed other key stakeholders). Another important component of the relationship equation is the research support capacity of the individual participant as explored in the following subsection.

*Linguistic Shifts in Descriptions of Research Support*

Participant responses regarding workplace interactions with academics reflect differing levels of assistance, role complexity and experience or seniority. This was particularly evident in the findings on varying levels of participant role complexity, and in the material regarding participant performance expectations and accountabilities presented in Chapter 6. Variations in role complexity also appeared in participant responses regarding workplace relationships as reported in Chapter 7. Building on the latter, in further analyses of the participant responses in which they described why their working relationships with academics were ‘most satisfying’; three common response categories emerged, which pointed to three distinct levels of research support or research facilitation being performed by participants. The three levels or elements of research support provided by participants, as described in their own words, were: ‘Service’; ‘Value-Adding’; and ‘Co- Contribution’.

The first category: ‘Service’, captured responses in which participants indicated they enjoyed aspects of their working relationships with academics in relation to how they were able to ‘support’ academic work. In these responses academics were at times referred to as ‘clients’, with participants reported purpose to provide a ‘…service that makes the administrative side of research easier for them…’ (32185).

The second category: ‘Value-Adding’, captured the responses of participants who perceived their input to be valued and/or that their input, work or effort made a difference to others or to a desired outcome. A sense of purpose or a sense of achievement tended to be evident in these responses. In the words of one participant:

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Liaising with academics about funding opportunities and advice on grant applications because seeing the improvements occur and grants be successful, or receive encouraging feedback is rewarding and the academics appreciate the support and advice (32246).
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Lastly, the category: ‘Co- Contribution’, captured instances in which participants reported themselves as working in partnership with academics, where the participant brought skills or expertise that differed or were absent in other stakeholders, thereby demonstrating skill complementarity. For example:
…my co-contribution in working with academics to achieve successful grant submission. Recognition of my role in achieving major recognised growth in the university success in major grant round outcomes (32059).

A tiered linguistic shift between these three categories or descriptors of research support became apparent, once the responses in each of the three categories were stratified by participant salary levels (see the far right hand side in Figure 9.2). There was some level of cross-over between the categories, most noticeably in the responses from participants who were on the salary ranges HEW 6-7 to HEW 8-9. Participants at the HEW 2-5 salary level predominantly described their working relationships with academic researchers in terms of providing a ‘Service’, while the most senior RMA participants (HEW 10/10+) described their interactions in terms of a partnership or ‘Co- Contribution’. This ‘linguistic shift’ is also described as a function of increasing participant role complexity given the earlier results reported in Chapter 6, of a connection found between participant salary levels and level of role complexity (see far left hand side in Figure 9.2). The resultant three-tiered model, as shown in Figure 9.2, is offered as a possible tool for examining or interpreting the differing levels of contribution or facilitative work of university professional staff in general, and university RMA in particular.

**Figure 9.2** Linguistic Shifts in Descriptions of Research Support

A previously unreported excerpt from a single interview from the first round (in which the senior-level interviewee was providing examples of typical interactions with Academic Researchers) serendipitously illustrates these three levels of research support (as indicated in
brackets embedded in the following quotation). The response highlights not only the three levels of research support provided by staff of differing levels of seniority, but it also demonstrates an earlier reported finding that a participant could potentially provide any one of the three described levels of research support (assuming, as is the case in the example given, that the participant is at the more senior responsibility level and therefore has the personal and professional capacity to operate at each level).

…well with academics there are interactions through (research office section) with workshops and seminars …, strategic meetings around applications, a researcher knows how to do their research and how to develop a research project but then we have knowledge around what is particularly wanted by someone who is giving money like the ARC or the NHMRC for example and how you can make little twists and turns and strategic decisions around projects to make them more attractive to those funding organisations…that is one of the key, I guess that is one of the higher level interactions with the researchers (‘Co-Contribution’) …with the other managers, faculty managers… it tends to be more around process issues at the application stage, what sort of approvals they need to get in place, issues with budgets that they need me to check…then in the post-awards stage it’s around managing grants and funding in accordance with funding agreements and contracts (‘Value-Adding’) …then at the lower level there is a lot of discussion around just minor technical issues, applications and contracts and …lower level staff in my area are always having to follow up for progress reports, final reports (‘Service’)… (1224).

To sum up the above, the three levels of research support are best described as being part of a spectrum of research facilitative approaches/activities of participants that appear to have a correlation with the level of a participant’s salary and role complexity. Further research using these three levels of research support would test the robustness of this conceptualisation.

Together, the three levels of research support (‘Service’, Value-Adding’ and ‘Co- Contribution’) and the two levels of academic researcher/RMA engagement (‘Thin’ and ‘Thick’) described earlier in this section, form the foundational building blocks of a model developed by this researcher to understand and interpret the academic researcher/RMA workplace relationship dynamic. The model is presented in the next section.
Application: A Model of Researcher Engagement and RMA Role Capacity and Contributive Potential

The conceptual model shown in Figure 9.3 maps the interaction between two continuums apparent in the study’s findings, and three levels of research support identified from aforementioned participant descriptions of satisfactory workplace interactions with academic researchers. The first continuum, ‘Degree of RMA Role Complexity’, draws on findings from Chapter 6 regarding the varying levels of RMA role complexity apparent in the broad ‘Statements of Responsibility’ that was derived from participant role descriptions stratified by salary levels and staffing subgroups. The second continuum, ‘Degree of Academic Researcher Engagement’, reflects the levels of engagement between academic researchers and RMA revealed in the findings on workplace relations in Chapter 7, and further analyses provided in the preceding subsections of this chapter. It should be noted that the model is based on findings drawn from the single-actor perspective of RMA participants only.

![Model of Researcher Engagement and RMA Role Capacity and Contributive Potential](image)

**Figure 9.3** Model of Researcher Engagement and RMA Role Capacity and Contributive Potential

**Explanation of Model**

As shown in Figure 9.3, the model consists of four quadrants and two axes. The horizontal axis is a continuum with a high degree of role complexity of the individual RMA staff member on the right, and a low degree of role complexity on the left. The vertical axis is a continuum with
a high (thick) degree of engagement of the individual academic researcher with RMA staff on the top, and a low (thin) degree of engagement on the bottom. Each of the resultant four quadrants reflects their own combination of degree of academic engagement and RMA role complexity.

‘Service’ Quadrant
The lower left ‘Service’ quadrant captures situations where the academic researcher demonstrates low to medium levels of engagement with the RMA staff member, and the RMA staff member has low to medium role complexity. The level of support provided in this instance may also be dictated by the task itself. In other words, a relatively simple administrative task may be involved. For example, opening an account for a new research project, or providing advice on a grant application deadline. In such instances the academic staff member would not be expected to engage in any depth with the RMA staff member on that task. In these described scenarios, participants who were typically HEW 6-7 or below gave descriptions about providing a service, being customer orientated, and of being supportive of research academics and students.

However, an RMA staff member may have the capacity to ‘value-add’ to a project or grant submission but is frustrated in that capacity. For example, the RMA staff member is reduced to only being able to act as a ‘post-office’ box for a grant application because the academic researcher has not complied with internal grant deadlines, and/or is dismissive of the potential value-adding role of the RMA staff member. This is despite the capacity of the RMA staff member to provide advice or feedback on the application, thereby potentially helping its chances of success. Therefore, the ‘Value-Adding’ potential of the RMA staff member becomes one of ‘Service’ only, as in the example given there was no time and/or operational space made available for the RMA staff member to do anything but provide a basic level of support; the outcome resulting in a reduction of potential and untapped staffing capacity. In these types of instances, participants talk about the ‘us and them’ between academics and RMA staff, of feeling devalued by academics and frustrated by the lack of recognition of their role potential.

‘Value-Adding (Low-Specialisation)’ Quadrant
The upper left ‘Value-Adding (Low-Specialisation)’ quadrant captures situations where the academic researcher demonstrates medium to thick levels of engagement with the RMA staff member. For example, these researchers may show that they: value, respect, and/or appreciate the input of the RMA staff member; comply with RMA communicated (or other related)
deadlines; and, work within the relevant policies and guidelines, or actively seek advice on same. In other words, they are likely to show ‘compliant-friendly’ behaviours with research administration policies, procedures, directives and guidelines. In turn, the RMA staff member has low to medium levels of role complexity reflected by their respective typical salary ranges of HEW 6-7 and below (hence the descriptor ‘Low-Specialisation’). In the described situation these RMA are given the operating space in which to fully discharge their role with RMA participants in this category indicating that they feel they are able to ‘make a difference’ or value-add to the task at hand.

It has been shown in Shelley’s (2008, 2010a, 2010b) research and Allen-Collinson’s (2006, 2007, 2009) work in particular, that one of the biggest challenges that is faced by the RMA occupational group is the recognition of the role and contribution to research activities, as well as the academic status divide. Further, as has been reported in the findings of this study and likewise as Shelley’s research pointed out – the RMA role is moving from predominantly general forms of administrative support, to increasingly specialised and at the higher levels, strategic, workplace participation. The move to automated systems and online delivery of a range of administrative requirements, as referred to by participants in this current study, underlines the move away by centralised research offices from being the main providers of general research administration support; to the provision of more sophisticated forms of research development functions, for example. Therefore, it could be argued that RMA work is moving away from the ‘Service’ component in this model, towards the more specialised forms of research support, herein described as ‘Value-Adding’ and ‘Co- Contribution’; particularly as RMA increasingly builds specialisms leading to growing ‘research capital’, as described by Shelley (2008, 2010b). As reported in the opening chapter, this occupational movement and related effects on the academic researcher/RMA interface has been described by Shelley (2008, 2010b) as the ‘shifting arena’ in university research.

‘Co- Contribution’ Quadrant
The upper right ‘Co- Contribution’ quadrant captures situations where the academic researcher demonstrates medium to thick levels of engagement with the RMA staff member, and the RMA staff member has medium to high role-complexity. RMA in these instances would typically be on HEW 8-9 salary levels and above. In this scenario, the RMA staff member generally has some form of expertise or specialist skill that cannot be supplied by the academic researcher. In turn, the academic researcher recognises this expertise and works in a collaborative manner with the RMA individual, noting that each has a role to play on the project or task. Again in these situations the RMA have the operating space in which to fully discharge their role, with participants in this category indicating they feel they are partners or co-collaborators with
differing roles, skills and expertise; and that they have, for example, contributed to the task outcome or played a major role in the success of an endeavour. Such partnerships would be at odds with the typical conceptualisation of professional staff as ‘…followers in relation to formal academic leadership’ (H. L. Davis, 2012, p. 38).

‘Value-Adding (High-Specialisation)’ Quadrant

The lower right ‘Value-Adding (High Specialisation)’ quadrant captures situations where the academic researcher demonstrates low to medium levels of engagement with the RMA staff member, and the RMA staff member has medium to high role complexity. The RMA staff in this instance would typically be on HEW 8-9 salary levels or above. Similar to the ‘Service’ quadrant the level of support provided may be dictated by the task itself. For example, the high-end design of a suitable research software platform by the more senior ‘RMA (Data/IT Systems)’ participant may not require ‘thick’ academic research engagement in order for the work or output to be value-adding to the research process. In other words, the value-adding relies more on the skill level of the RMA staff member and less on academic engagement. However, the output of these specialist members may be further enhanced the more the academic researchers engage with the process, product or activity.

Conversely, this quadrant also captures situations where the more senior, specialised RMA staff members who have the expertise to act as co-contributors or partners in an endeavour or project, are ‘thwarted’ by academic researchers. This can occur, for example, when academics dismiss RMA knowledge, work around the RMA staff member, or fail to recognise or value the RMA expertise. The result of this is that the RMA staff member’s contribution may become hampered or otherwise reduced to one of ‘Value-Adding’, rather than the more significant ‘Co- Contribution’ or partnership model of interaction. Such an outcome again, has the potential to frustrate staff and reduce the potential of a project’s success or outcomes. Such instances also occur when the organisational culture or surrounding institutional power dynamics are not supportive of the RMA co-contributive potential. Examples of this have been given where participants have indicated the role of research services is downplayed in the university, and academic non-compliance of research administrative requirements is ‘indulged’.

It is within the ‘Co- Contribution’, and to a lesser extent ‘Value-Adding (High Specialisation)’ quadrants, that Whitchurch’s (2008c) ‘third space’ would be situated; defined as being an area located between professional and academic domains, in which a range of contributive efforts from both academic researcher and RMA are required. Such collaborations would be more in line with a ‘partnership’ as opposed to a ‘hierarchical’ model of academic researcher/RMA
working relationship, the latter dynamic being more prevalent in the other two quadrants. Further, following subsequent iterations of the ERA, it could be expected that there would be a greater number of ‘blended professionals’ as opposed to ‘bounded professionals’ appointed to senior RMA positions (and these positions would be conceptually located within the ‘Co- Contribution’ quadrant). ‘Blended professionals’, according to Whitchurch’s (2008c) senior professional staffing taxonomy mentioned in Chapter 1, are university staff who cross-over professional and academic domains in order to discharge their work functions, whilst ‘bounded professionals’ refer to those staff who work within more traditionally defined roles. The increasing requirement for PhD qualified RMAs as found in this current study and in UK RMA research (Allen-Collinson, 2006; Shelley, 2010b), is arguably a portent of this staffing shift.

**Purpose and Function of the Model**

The model as depicted in Figure 9.3 provides an organisational mapping tool in which actual and potential research support levels can be situated. It also has application as a basic descriptive tool for both researchers and RMA about the three elements or phases of research support work. The underlying concepts on which the model is drawn can be used to draw attention to challenges, blockages or areas of mismatch in the workplace interactions of researchers and RMA. This is particularly useful in terms of improving research performance outcomes such as grant application success rates.

The changing nature of RMA work is a feature of this model, as it depicts the three phases of research support identified in this study. The findings indicate that the level of research support provided depends not only on the RMA role complexity and the expertise and capacity of the RMA individual, but that it is dependent on the degree to which academics engage with RMA. This suggests that workplace performance measures, efficiency targets, personnel training, agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), appropriate feedback loops, recursive management practices and so on, can be brought to bear on the work of RMA to ensure they are individually and collectively working to the requirements of their role, and that the research services unit, for example, is productive and efficient.

However, the effectiveness of RMA cannot be viewed in isolation from academic researchers and, therefore, the effectiveness of the overall research service unit cannot be viewed in isolation from the manner in which the respective university’s academic body engages with the research support functions provided. In short, it appears from the perspective of the study’s participants that it is predominantly the academic researcher who determines the level of engagement, thereby effectively determining the level of support that the RMA can provide – which can result in untapped contribution potential and a frustration of staffing resources.
Figure 9.4 provides a diagram which describes the connection between academic researcher engagement and the optimisation, or otherwise confounding, of RMA role capacity and contributive potential within an institutional context. It builds a conceptual framework with which to comprehend more fully the aforementioned findings of a ‘Productive Workplace’ versus a ‘Contested Workplace’, as described earlier in this chapter. As shown in Figure 9.4, the left-hand side of the diagram (‘Academic Supportive Environment’) indicates an upward movement, with a stepped progression through the higher levels of RMA role capacity and potential. Equally, the right-hand side of the diagram (‘Academic Non-Supportive Environment’) demonstrates a downward process in which RMA role capacity and potential is frustrated or limited.

Future Research
Participants provided examples where the academic researcher/RMA relationship works well – where the RMA role is recognised and supported, and the three possible levels of RMA support are engaged with, appreciated and/or facilitated. Conversely, there are findings that highlight situations where the academic researcher/RMA interaction is poor and sub-optimal; for example, where there is a non-supportive organisational culture or poor levels of academic compliance with administrative guidelines. Given these findings, the next step would be to
determine what factors typically need to be present, or absent, for the relationship to work (or not work). For instance, why is the relationship positive for some but not for others? How can research services enhance their workplace relationships with academic researchers and how can faculties encourage the engagement of their academic researchers with RMA staff and research support processes? However, the process of engagement cannot be said to be one-sided. For example, Shelley found unevenness in how some RMAs interpreted and delivered on their roles compared to others in similar positions, including a difference in how they were treated and/or valued in the workplace, indicating that:

Credibility within the university was influenced by how (RMAs) developed their profile in the local context (2010b, p. 53).

In other words, the effectiveness of research support not only depends on a supportive work environment in which RMA potential to contribute is maximized and where their contribution is valued and supported; a further factor is what each individual RMA could do to improve his/her own individual work effectiveness and level of personal agency over their own workspace. In this context it would, therefore, be important to research the strategies of those who are successful in developing and maintaining supportive relationships with academic researchers, to see what the RMA individual could do to improve his/her individual work effectiveness. The gathering and sharing of insights into the more positive relationships by those who have managed to make them successful, or have participated in effective academic researcher/RMA working relationships, would be of undoubted benefit also.

The ‘Model of Researcher Engagement and RMA Role Capacity and Contributive Potential’ offered here provides a tool with theoretical, strategic, managerial, and practical applications. For example, decisions can be made as to what position on the model a research service office is ideally located – is it in providing front-line processing support (‘Service’), or is it in ‘Value-Adding’ to Early Career Researchers? Or is it in hot-housing only those very successful academics requiring the mostly highly skilled specialist staff in these offices to facilitate/partner the research performance endeavours/targets (‘Co- contribution’)?

Can the model be used to explain the wider academic/administrator dynamic? That is, are the three levels of research support valid categories for the support provided to academics by the wider professional staff body? Ideally, future research could investigate if differing support levels are evident outside of the RMA group. The aim of testing these concepts further would be to use this theoretical construct in assisting with career planning and staff development.
Further, by disseminating this model and drawing attention to the associated discourse to other audiences, most specifically academics, this potentially could lead to the development of a more nuanced understanding of the work of RMA, and if found to be applicable, the wider university professional staff population. This would enable academics to more evenly gear their attitudes and expectations regarding the academic/administrator interface, thereby reducing friction and facilitating exploration of opportunities more appropriately. Finally, can the model be refined in a way to support data collection that can investigate whether high value-adding and co-collaboration – the positive dynamics – can explain, in some part, specific elements of increased research activity or performance?

**Policy Implementation**

*Key Findings*

This sixth and final area of inquiry provided insight into the level of participant involvement with preparations for the implementation of the newly announced Australian Research Quality Framework (RQF). The RQF was a proposed accountability measure of publicly funded research, in much the same vein as the national Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in the UK. One section of the questionnaire and a separate interview provided data on RMA perspectives on the RQF, alongside experiences of implementing this new policy. Participants were primarily focused on making sense of the details, design, purpose, implications, and impacts of the policy. This process was one of active learning, noted as a necessary step prior to policy implementation (Schofield, 2004).

It became apparent from the many different strands of detailed data collection in this component of the study, that there were some persistent themes in relation to the experience of RQF implementation. One of these was the high degree of uncertainty about the RQF, exacerbated by the nature of the policy and major gaps in detail. This resulted in a range of reactions and experiences in engaging with implementation. Many of those interviewed had been following debates and were actively involved in preliminary activity; their comments emphasising how momentous the event was for them and the sector. One major concern (where concerns existed) was that the RQF would result in higher workload, coupled with cynicism that while additional resources may be available, they would not be deployed to address the workload. Consequently, there was a sense of impending burden. On the other hand, there was a frisson of excitement about the prospect of not only the opportunity to be part of this endeavour, but in the potential offered for more recognition and an enhanced role for RMA in their institutions.
Participant perspectives on the possible future effects of the RQF post-implementation were largely positive, insofar as the new roles and specialisations that would arise as a result would lead to greater professional recognition of this group by others. Such expectations resonated with Shelley’s (2008) findings that the RAE in the UK changed work roles and impacted on the professionalisation status of English RMA. Cunningham (2008) draws connections between ‘critical incidents’ or ‘significant events’ in professional life which have the effect of creating a disturbance in a person’s ‘professional equilibrium’, thereby having ‘…the potential to dramatically accelerate professional learning… (p. 161). Moreover, as Shelley’s (2008, 2010b) findings suggest, this can extend to professionalisation. Certainly there was some anticipation of this occurring among the participants in this study.

**Future Research**

The implementation work on the RQF was in fact a prelude to preparatory activity for its replacement, the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA), which was rolled out in 2010. Given that the main focus in the future will be on the ERA, the material reported here on the RQF will have its own historical significance as contribution to administrative history. It also provides a framework for studying a group in transition, as well as providing relatively rare and detailed information about how a subgroup of university administration engaged with preparation for the implementation of a major shift in policy.

It would, therefore, be of value to explore further whether or not RMA work has changed with the advent of the ERA, in what ways, and what this has meant for the research support/researcher working relationship over successive iterations of the ERA. Such research could also examine if associated changes in RMA work and the research support/researcher working relationship have in turn impacted on the professional alignment, professional characteristics and other forms of occupational identity of the RMA group.

**RMA AND UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PERFORMANCE**

The study of RMA as reported in this thesis is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, because this group, and professional staff in universities more generally, are so little researched, and yet constitute a significant cohort of the employees in the tertiary sector. Secondly, because they are an occupational group transitioning to professionhood. Thirdly, they are both stakeholders and agents in the success of universities. Fourthly, because research has gained such an important status in the sector which in turn is undergoing massive changes. Finally, because the stakes are so high in regard to research that all who are involved in research cannot help but be impacted by the expectations placed on research and researchers.
In *The Challenge of Establishing World-Class Universities*, Jamil Salmi stated that:

Preoccupations about university rankings reflect the general recognition that economic growth and global competitiveness are increasingly driven by knowledge and that universities play a key role in that context. Indeed, rapid advances in science and technology across a wide range of areas...provide great potential for countries to accelerate and strengthen their economic development. The application of knowledge results in more efficient ways of producing goods and services and delivering them more efficiently and at a lower costs to a greater number of people... (2009, pp. 2-3).

Statements such as these make clear that regardless of any shortfalls in current methodologies – university rankings are here to stay. Indeed, Hazelkorn (2013) in her work on the impacts, methodological shortfalls, and reshaping effects of university ranking systems, indicated that:

Because higher education has become an essential weapon in the battle to attract international and mobile talent and capital, rankings are often interpreted as a proxy for global competitiveness (p. 5)... and (have) become a major driver of a geo-political reputation race... (p. 2).

The relationship between university ranking systems and institutional research performance is particularly reinforced in that ‘...most global rankings focus disproportionately on research...’ (Hazelkorn, 2013, p. 3). Additionally, whilst, not all universities can be, or are aspiring to be top ranking, most aim to ‘...make significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge through research...' (Salmi, 2009, p. 71). Therefore, given the heightened international, national, and local focus on institutional research performance, it is clearly pertinent to explore and identify more clearly the role RMA have to play in achieving outcomes.

In Salmi’s diagrammatic depiction of ‘Characteristics of a World-Class University’, there are three key conditions: ‘Concentration of Talent’; ‘Abundant Resources’ and ‘Favorable Governance’ (2009, p. 8). Focusing on the research side of the equation; ‘Concentration of Talent’ includes high-performing researchers (and research students); ‘Abundant Resources’ includes the proceeds and multiplying effects of successful research grant performance; and ‘Favorable Governance’ includes ‘supportive regulatory frameworks’, with an emphasis on low levels of government bureaucracy (Salmi, 2009). While not mentioned in Salmi’s analysis of what contributes to ‘world-class’, and based on this thesis, it can be argued that university
research managers and administrators have a role to play in each of these three identified areas by:

- supporting, value-adding and/or co-contributing to academic research endeavour;
- contributing to institutional research performance; and
- reducing the impact of government regulatory frameworks on researchers and research activity, in their role as expert navigators in environments requiring increasingly complex forms of compliance and accountability.

However, the role capacity and contributive potential of RMA as has been shown in this study can be either facilitated or diminished depending largely on:

- the manner in which academic researchers engage with this group;
- the depth of understanding by stakeholders of the RMA role and the recognition of contribution (both actual and potential); and
- the extent to which faculty and individual researchers are oriented to compliance, either positively or negatively.

The ability of an institution to recruit and retain quality RMA staff, plus the ongoing delivery and expansion of suitable RMA professional development training programs (not to mention workloads and staffing/resourcing shortfalls) is also a factor.

The model provided in this study pertaining to the interaction between levels of researcher engagement and levels of RMA support, offers both theoretical and practical insight in how to foster at the local level, recognition, support, and ideally, the empowerment of the RMA role potential. The outcome of improving RMA effectiveness is the building of the capacity of universities’ research support functions and ultimately research performance outcomes. Although academic engagement with RMA staff has been argued as central to the enablement of full RMA contributive potential, it is equally argued that RMA need to feel valued, to have a sense of purpose in their work, to have the operating space in which they can support, value-add, and contribute to university activity. This will require positive working relationships between researchers and RMA in particular. The requirement for positive, constructive working relationships between these two key staffing groups is not only to ensure universities optimise the expertise on both sides, but also to help ensure the retention of increasingly highly-skilled, specialist, RMA staff.
However, it will take more than local level action. As identified in this study, there are shortfalls in the recognition of the RMA role capacity and contributive potential by:

1. Government – as evidenced by a lack of policy rhetoric and strategic attention in this area in Australia; and
2. the Higher Education Sector – as evidenced by the relative absence of RMA in the lexicon or literature about universities or research activity – although this situation, as previously described, is slowly changing.

There are also shortfalls evident in the RMA professionalisation process, as identified in this research. The most dominant is the finding that over a quarter of university RMA in Australia hold no university level qualifications, which has been shown to reduce the ability to engage with policy, and to hamper career progression. There are also the underlying issues concerned with gender, in what is a highly feminised workforce. Putting aside the finding of a mixed understanding of what the RMA profession is, and the findings of poor levels of perceived professional stakeholder regard; there were also identified gaps in professional development offerings, professional membership levels and professional development uptake.

On the plus side, there is evidence of an international trend of increasingly globalised forms of research collaboration and an ongoing concentration on national knowledge building. Both of these movements will continue to foster increases in RMA role complexity and specialisations. Likewise, government accountability measures and performance frameworks such as the UK RAE (now REF) and the Australian Research Training Scheme (RTS), have been seen to foster workplace changes which have led to shifts in the RMA occupational group. Participants ventured that the RQF would also have professionalising effects on the RMA and, based on the UK experience, it can only be assumed its successor, the ERA, will have similar impacts to that of the RAE.

Other factors which will continue to move the RMA role from that of routine-based functions to the more strategic, policy-orientated type of work, is the presence of supportive organisational cultures where RMA role capacity is recognised and the contributive potential of the research support function has been enabled (such as in the examples given in participant responses). Increased automation of administrative processes, as previously reported, will also have an effect on reducing the need for RMA to perform routine paper-based tasks; further releasing this occupational group from the requirement to perform the more mundane administrative activities. Last but not least, individual increases in higher education credentials and associated
increases in minimum required qualifications by employers (including the more recent trend towards the requirement of HDR qualifications), and the flow on effects of continuing role complexification and growing specialisations, will collectively lead to greater demand for the professional recognition of RMA.

The case for recognising the role, contribution and perspectives of RMA, as has been made in this thesis, is the same necessary argument to be made for all professional staff members in universities. It is therefore hoped that this research inspires similar studies across all spectrums of university activity, thereby adding weight and critical mass to this developing field of study.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A
PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS AND PRIZES

Publications

Conference Presentations

Papers
Posters


Awards and Prizes

- $2,100 Research Higher Degree (RHD) Student International Conference Travel Grant, School of Education, University of Newcastle, 20 September 2010.
- £100 SRHE Bursary to attend annual SRHE conference in Wales to present two papers, 3 November 2010.
- Awarded an Australian Postgraduate Award Scholarship (upgraded from UNRSC), September 2008.
- $600 RHD Student Conference Travel grant, School of Education, University of Newcastle, 28 June 2007.
- $883 RHD Student Project grant, School of Education, University of Newcastle, 30 May, 2007.
- $600 RHD Student Conference Travel Grant, School of Education, University of Newcastle, 1 August 2006.
- $2,000 ATEM conference travel scholarship to attend the 2006 TEMC Annual Conference, 11 April 2006.
Four central research sub-questions were devised to direct this research. The following matrix specifies how each of the four guiding sub-research questions and their sub-parts were addressed by data source, research instrumentation and research item number. For ease of reference, the questionnaire and interview items referred to in this matrix can be found at Appendices 5 and 8.

### Sub-Question 1:
*What changes have been occurring in the Higher Education sector that directly impact on the work of Research Services?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Components</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the characteristics of the Higher Education Sector in Australia and what are its major drivers?</td>
<td>Documentary and Literature Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the nature of the research environment in Australian Higher Education institutions (history, current scene, pressures on research performance (for example: funding and resource issues))?</td>
<td>Documentary and Literature Review Questionnaire Interview Rd 1 Interview Rd 2</td>
<td>48 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the specific operations undertaken by Research Services sections in Australian universities (research policy development and implementation, research grants administration, research higher degree administration and scholarships, ethics and safety clearances, research committee administration and research information systems and statistics) and what if any changes have there been in these services over time?</td>
<td>Documentary Review Questionnaire Interview Rd 1 Interview Rd 2</td>
<td>5, 26 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the levels of responsibilities taken by staff in research services (their functions, and performance and accountability frameworks) within the University context?</td>
<td>Questionnaire Interview Rd 1 Interview Rd 2</td>
<td>7-9, 26, 32-34, 43-47 3 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the RQF (what are the aims of the policy? How did the sector respond? How was it implemented and who was involved?)?</td>
<td>Documentary and Literature Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sub-Question 2:
*What is the profile of Research Services staff in Australia and what are their specific duties?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Components</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic characteristics (gender and age, campus location, university membership grouping);</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>1-3, 50-51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career paths (qualifications, salary levels, duration of employment, employment background, reasons for choice);</td>
<td>Questionnaire Interview Rd 1</td>
<td>4-7, 10-14, 17-27, 47-48 1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and range of duties of different groupings of officers; and</td>
<td>Questionnaire Interview Rd 1 Interview Rd 2</td>
<td>5, 26 3 1-2, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational structure (reporting lines, decision making processes, level of input).</td>
<td>Questionnaire Interview Rd 2</td>
<td>8-9, 32-34, 43-46, 60-61 1-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Sub-Question 3:
**How do Research Services staff make sense of and view and interpret their roles?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Components</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working Relationships:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- With each other,</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>31, 35-38, 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- With academic staff,</td>
<td>Questionnaire Interview Rd 1</td>
<td>31, 35-38 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- With research students,</td>
<td>Questionnaire Interview Rd 1</td>
<td>31, 35-38 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- With other sections of the university, and</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>31, 35-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- With groups external to the university.</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>31, 35-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal satisfaction with, and expectations about, their role:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Role expectations and performance accountabilities;</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>43-46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Level of workplace participation in decision-making; and</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>32-34, 60-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Training, professional development and opportunities for promotion.</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Alignment:</strong></td>
<td>Document and Literature Review Questionnaire Interview Rd 1</td>
<td>7, 15-16, 19, 27-31, 47 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Nomenclature issues,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Professional characteristics,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Professional self-concept, and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Professional stakeholder-regard.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sub-Question 4:
**What does the operational environment of Research Services staff look like from their perspective?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Components</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The perceived impacts on changes to the Higher Education sector and the roles of research managers and administrative staff;</td>
<td>Documentary and Literature Review Questionnaire Interview Rd 1 Interview Rd 2</td>
<td>48, 58 4 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace characteristics and culture (that is, decision making processes, participation levels, interactions, relationships and modes of communication);</td>
<td>Literature Review Questionnaire Interview Rd 1</td>
<td>31-41, 60-61 2-3, 6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition level of research managers and administrative staff in terms of being perceived by others and by themselves as being members of a profession; and</td>
<td>Literature Review Professional Association Websites Questionnaire Interview Rd 1</td>
<td>30-31 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections between professionalisation process and nomenclature issues and recruitment criteria, staffing profiles, career profiles, HEW/HEO levels, membership of professional associations and training, development and networking opportunities.</td>
<td>Literature Review Professional Association Websites Questionnaire Interview Rd 5</td>
<td>4-16, 19-21, 26-31, 42, 48 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Sub-Question 4 (continued):**

*What does the operational environment of Research Services staff look like from their perspective?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Components</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The perceived impact of the RQF in terms of its:</td>
<td>Documentary and Literature Review University</td>
<td>55-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-significance in relation to other changes/reforms;</td>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-effect on the functions, responsibilities and activities of research managers and administrative staff;</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>58, 60-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-effect on: the workplace (resources and staffing), research activity and research quality; and</td>
<td>Interview Rd 2</td>
<td>1, 4, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-implementation vis-à-vis communication, processes and challenges.</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>55-56, 58-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Rd 2</td>
<td>62-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>52-54, 57-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Rd 2</td>
<td>62-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subject: A National Study For and About University Research Services Staff

Dear (firstname)

Research is integral to the work of universities, and will be crucial to the status of Australian universities in the future. In turn, such research activity relies on the contribution and efforts of university research services staff. It is the intention of this research to build a profile of university research services staff, to highlight their contribution across a range of areas and activities, and to seek their perspectives on changes in higher education which may have an impact on their work.

This email has been sent to individual research services staff members in Australian public universities. The contact list used has been drawn from university internet websites. This email is an invitation for you to take part in this research study via the completion of an anonymous online questionnaire, with the option of further participation in interviews conducted by phone.

Details of the study and what is involved can be found at:


To log on to the questionnaire, either click on the following link, or cut and paste it into your browser:

http://surveymanager.newcastle.edu.au/login.asp?anom=73x1x1

The questionnaire is available now and will remain open until Thursday 30 November 2006.

Please participate in this study as your participation would be warmly appreciated.

Regards

Researcher          Research Supervisor
Darlene Sebalj        A/Prof Allyson Holbrook
SORTI                 SORTI
University of Newcastle University of Newcastle
APPENDIX D
INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR THE QUESTIONNAIRE COMPONENT OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The Profile, Role and Contribution of University Research Services Staff and Their Perspectives on Managing Change in Australian Universities.

You are invited to take part in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Darlene Sebalj, a PhD candidate within the School of Education at the University of Newcastle. Ms Sebalj is conducting the research as part of her PhD under the direct supervision of A/Professor Allyson Holbrook.

Why is this research being done?

Research is integral to the work of universities, and will be crucial to the status of Australian universities in the future. In order to gain a clear understanding of research in universities we need to obtain a perspective that recognises the role and contribution of managers and administrators within research services sections. This group is virtually unresearched in the literature in higher education.

This research will build a profile of university research services staff, identifying their activities and roles in the context of a change process. It will develop a picture of the change environment in which these staff operate and their relationships with other key stakeholders.

The research is set against the contextual backdrop of the foreshadowed implementation of the Australian Research Quality Framework (RQF). The research will provide research administrators with an opportunity to articulate their role, work and contributions to research activity in Australian universities and make a major contribution to the current body of knowledge regarding research administration in higher education.

Who can participate in this research?

All research services staff of Australian publically funded universities are invited to take part in this research. This study will be of particular interest to university staff who undertake functions in research policy development and implementation, research grants administration, research Higher Degree administration and scholarships, ethics and safety clearances, research committee administration and research information systems and statistics. Research services staff at all levels of the organisation are welcome to participate in this study.

All research services staff other than those at the researcher’s own University have been approached to participate in this study.

What choice do you have?

Participation in this research is entirely your choice. Only those people who give their informed consent will be included in the study. Whether or not you decide to participate, your decision will not disadvantage you in any way.
There are two major components of this study. The first of these is an online anonymous questionnaire. The second is a set of two phone interviews. If you choose to participate in the online questionnaire you are under no obligation to participate in the interviews.

**What would you be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire. The questions asked will draw on your role as a Research Manager/Administrator. The questionnaire will take no more than 30 minutes to complete in one session and/or can be completed over a number of sessions before electronic submission, providing you save your work each time you exit the website.

Once you have submitted the completed questionnaire that will be all that you need to do unless you also wish to participate in the interview component of the study.

If you do choose to participate in the interview process then you will need to read the Information Statement detailing that component of the study. Please note there is no link between the questionnaire and the interview process. The questionnaire is anonymous and the electronic file which is created by the questionnaire is de-identified providing no identifiable link to the interview process. All participants in the interview component of the study are those who have self-initiated contact with the researcher as per the instructions given (see Information Statement).

**What are the risks and benefits of participating?**

No physical or psycho-social harm are envisaged in the study. The questions have been carefully designed to ensure that participants are not exposed to potential embarrassment, conflicts of interest or forms of professional indiscretion. The research deliberately avoids any potentially sensitive data about the RQF.

There is no payment or direct benefit for participating in this research.

**How will your privacy be protected?**

The completed questionnaire will be electronically submitted to a server managed by the University’s Corporate Services. At that point there is no identifiable material by which to link the questionnaire to the respondent as the file created has a code which is either generated by the survey program and/or is created by the respondent themselves. It is not linked to the participant’s email address. The questionnaire data in turn undergoes a further de-identification process prior to it being sent to the researcher so that there is no electronic or otherwise link between the data and the original sender. Therefore the questionnaire is completely anonymous and there is a separation between the questionnaire raw data and the researcher. Any follow up emails from the researcher to potential participants will be ‘blanket’ emails as the researcher will not at any time be able to determine who or who has not completed the questionnaire.

All hard copy data and correspondence generated by the questionnaires will be housed in a locked steel filing cabinet within the student researcher’s office. Only the student researcher will have access to the filing cabinet and the office location is within the Centre for the Study of Research Training and Impact’s (SORTI) offices at the Mayfield campus of the University of Newcastle. SORTI’s offices are located within a secure building that requires entry codes for authorised access.

This data will be kept for the duration of the candidature and candidature examination period. Once this period has expired, then the de-identified material will continue to be held as back up...
for any ensuing publication material. All material will be destroyed in a confidential manner five years from the end of the candidature period.

**How will the information collected be used?**

The data and related research findings will be reported in a thesis to be submitted for Ms Sebalj’s PhD in early 2008. Articles for publication in higher education and management journals and related publications plus presentations at higher education conferences and forums will also be drawn from this data set. Individual participants will not be identified in any reports arising from this project.

The study’s progress updates and outcomes will also be made available via SORTI’s website located within the University of Newcastle at: [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/sorti/projects10admin.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/sorti/projects10admin.html)

**What do you need to do to participate?**

Please read this Information Statement and be sure that you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything that you do not understand, or you have questions, contact the researcher Darlene Sebalj, or the research supervisor A/Professor Allyson Holbrook, as per the contact details above.

If you would like to participate, please complete the online questionnaire located at [http://surveymanager.newcastle.edu.au/login.asp?anom=73x1x1](http://surveymanager.newcastle.edu.au/login.asp?anom=73x1x1) following the instructions provided. Completion of the questionnaire is taken as informed consent. If you wish to take part in the interview component of this study then please read the relevant Information Statement.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Regards

__________________________          ___________________________
Darlene Sebalj      A/Professor Allyson Holbrook
PhD Candidate       Director, SORTI
University of Newcastle           University of Newcastle

**Complaints about this research**

*This project had been approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-236-0606*

Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan, 2308, telephone (02 49216333), email: [Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au)
APPENDIX E
ONLINE RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

The Profile, Role and Contribution of University Research Services Staff and their Perspectives on Managing Change in Australian Universities

A doctoral research project of the University of Newcastle

This questionnaire is directed to the people who work in the Research Services section of the university. Research Services typically has functions in:

- research policy development and implementation,
- research grants administration,
- research Higher Degree administration and scholarships,
- ethics and safety clearances,
- research committee administration and
- research information systems and statistics.

The questionnaire is about the profile, roles, contributions and workplace characteristics of university research managers and administrative staff and their perspectives regarding the implementation of the RQF as a government policy initiative affecting University research across Australia.

For full information about this research and this questionnaire, please click on the following web link:

Information Statement

After you have read this information statement, click on the BACK button of your browser to return to the questionnaire.
Outline of this questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 5 sections:

- Section 1 is devoted to obtaining a participant profile (non-identifying).
- Section 2 focuses on your career in administration, professional memberships and responsibilities.
- Section 3 looks at typical workplace interactions and modes of communication with other groups.
- Section 4 asks about current work-based opportunities and expectations. It also explores your perspectives on Research Services in general.
- The final section is about your perspectives on change and its implementation.

Before you finally submit your questionnaire, you will be asked about your willingness to participate in the next stage of this research involving one or two phone interviews. Only if you are willing to be interviewed will you then be asked for your contact information. These details will be separated from your questionnaire responses by the survey administrator before any information or data is passed on to the researcher.

No electronic link or otherwise will be retained between the interview process and the anonymous questionnaire.

All data from the completed questionnaire will be managed by Corporate Information at the University of Newcastle. It is only when the data collection is completed that the already de-identified data files will be passed on to the researcher.

Completing the questionnaire online:

- If you want to return later to finish the questionnaire, click on the Return Later button at the top of the screen.
- When you return, you will be required to enter the unique password which was generated on the logon screen; if you did not save the password and cannot remember it you will be required to start the questionnaire again. Ensure that you generate a password the next time you start the questionnaire.
- Make sure you click the Finalise button before exiting the questionnaire when you have completed it.
- If you have any enquiries about the questionnaire please email the Survey Administrator.

Important Note

Most items are compulsory; you will not be able to move to the next section until all items in the current section have been completed.

The questionnaire will be available until 30 November 2006.

If you would like to participate in the interview component of this research

If you would like to take part in the interview component of this research then please read the information statement highlighted below. This stage of the research study involves one to two phone interviews. You will be contacted regarding the interviews only if you
have indicated your willingness to be interviewed in the final section of the questionnaire (see details above) or via separate submission of an electronic consent form to the researcher as per the instructions found here:

**Information Statement for the Interview Component**

No electronic link or otherwise will be retained between the interview process and the anonymous questionnaire.

### Section 1... Participant Profile

**Q1... What is your campus location?**
- *(1) R1_1 Major metropolitan area (e.g. capital city or immediate hinterland)*
- *(2) R1_1 Other metropolitan area (e.g. major regional city)*
- *(3) R1_1 Rural*

**Q2... Age**
- *(1) R2_1 <25*
- *(2) R2_1 25-29*
- *(3) R2_1 30-34*
- *(4) R2_1 35-39*
- *(5) R2_1 40-44*
- *(6) R2_1 45-49*
- *(7) R2_1 50-54*
- *(8) R2_1 55-59*
- *(9) R2_1 60+*

**Q3... Gender**
- *(1) R3_1 Male*
- *(2) R3_1 Female*

**Q4... Highest Qualification**
- *(1) R4_1 Diploma*
- *(2) R4_1 Bachelor degree*
- *(3) R4_1 Graduate diploma*
- *(4) R4_1 Masters by Coursework*
- *(5) R4_1 Masters by Research*
- *(6) R4_1 PhD*
- *(7) R4_1 Professional Doctorate*
- *(8) R4_1 Other (please specify below)*

**Q5... Your position title (e.g. Grants Officer)**

R6_1 ..........................................................................................................................
Q6... How long have you been in your current position?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>R7_1 &lt; 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>R7_1 6 mths - 12 mths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>R7_1 1 - 2years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>R7_1 3 - 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>R7_1 6 - 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>R7_1 10+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q7... What specific level of qualification was required for your current position?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>R8_1 No qualification required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>R8_1 Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>R8_1 Bachelor degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>R8_1 Graduate diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>R8_1 Masters by Coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>R8_1 Masters by Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>R8_1 PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>R8_1 Professional Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>R8_1 Other (please specify below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R9_1 other qualification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q8... Who do you directly report to in your current position?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>R10_1 VC/DVC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>R10_1 PVC/Faculty Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>R10_1 Research Director/Head of Research Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>R10_1 Manager of Section/Team Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>R10_1 Dean of Graduate Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>R10_1 Other (please specify below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R11_1 other (please specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q9... How many staff report to you in your current position?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>R12_1 Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>R12_1 1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>R12_1 3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>R12_1 6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>R12_1 11-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>R12_1 16+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q10... What is your current HEW/HEO level?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>R13_1 2-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Section 2... Career Profile

### Q11... How long have you been at your current HEW/HEO level?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>R13_1 &lt;6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>R13_1 6-12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>R13_1 1-2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>R13_1 3-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>R13_1 6-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>R13_1 10+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q12... How long have you worked in universities in total?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>R15_1 &lt;1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>R15_1 1-3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>R15_1 4-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>R15_1 6-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>R15_1 11-15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>R15_1 16-20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>R15_1 20+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q13... How long have you worked in your current university in total?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>R16_1 &lt;1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>R16_1 1-3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>R16_1 4-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>R16_1 6-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>R16_1 11-15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>R16_1 16-20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>R16_1 20+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q14... How long have you worked in Research Services?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>R17_1 &lt;1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>R17_1 1-3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>R17_1 4-5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q15... Do you feel your career path is most closely aligned to:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>R18_1 Research Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>R18_1 University Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>R18_1 Other university activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>R18_1 Non-university activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>R18_1 Other (please specify below)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q16... Within the University sector, what other areas have you worked in? (select all that apply)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R20_1</td>
<td>Academic Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_2</td>
<td>Capital Works/Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_3</td>
<td>Executive Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_4</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_5</td>
<td>Foundation/Fundraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_6</td>
<td>Graduations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_7</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_8</td>
<td>Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_9</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_10</td>
<td>Prizes and Awards/Scholarships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_11</td>
<td>Records Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_12</td>
<td>Research Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_13</td>
<td>Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_14</td>
<td>Student Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_15</td>
<td>Student Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_16</td>
<td>Student Services (counselling/welfare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_17</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20_18</td>
<td>Other (please specify below)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q17... Outside the University sector, what areas have you worked in? (select all that apply)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R22_1</td>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_2</td>
<td>Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_3</td>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_4</td>
<td>Communication Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_5</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_6</td>
<td>Electricity, Gas and Water Supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_7</td>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_8</td>
<td>Government Administration and Defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_9</td>
<td>Health and Community Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_10</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_11</td>
<td>Mining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_12</td>
<td>Property and Business Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_13</td>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_14</td>
<td>Transport and Storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_15</td>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_16</td>
<td>Other (please specify below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R22_17</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R23_1</td>
<td>other area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q18a... Was it always your intention to work in universities?

- (1) R24_1 Yes
- (2) R24_1 No

Q18b... If No, where did you intend to work?

Q19... What factor/s carried the most weight in terms of your decision to work in universities?

R26_1

Q20a... Was it always your intention to work in Research Services?

- (1) R27_1 Yes
- (2) R27_1 No

Q20b... If No, where did you intend to work?

Q21... What factor/s carried the most weight in terms of your decision to work in Research Services?

R29_1

Q22a... Have you ever been employed as an academic?

- (1) R30_1 Yes
- (2) R30_1 No

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Other (please specify below)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R31_1</td>
<td>R31_2</td>
<td>R31_3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q22b... If Yes, were you employed to: (select all that apply)

- R31_1
- R31_2
- R31_3

R32_1 other employment type
Q23a... Have you personally undertaken research?

- (1) R33_1 Yes
- (2) R33_1 No

Q23b... If Yes, what form did it take?
R34_1 .................................................................

Section 2 (cont)... Professional Membership and Development

Q24... Please indicate if you are a member of the following associations. For each membership, please indicate your membership level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Association</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATEM</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMS</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AICD</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q25... How many hours of professional development/training do you undertake annually?

- (1) R44_1 Nil
- (2) R44_1 Less than 30 hours
- (3) R44_1 30 hours
- (4) R44_1 More than 30 hours

Q26a... To what extent do you see yourself as being a member of a profession?

- (1) R45_1 Not at all
- (2) R45_1 Mildly
- (3) R45_1 Moderately
- (4) R45_1 Quite strongly
- (5) R45_1 Very strongly
- (6) R45_1 Not sure

Q26b... How would you describe your profession?
R46_1 .................................................................

Q27a... Do any of the following groups see you as a member of a profession?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University management</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Staff within your area R49_1

4. Government funding agencies R50_1

5. Non-government funding agencies R51_1

6. DEST R52_1

7. Business/Industry R53_1

Q27b. Any other thoughts on recognition?

R54_1 .................................................................

Q28a. Please indicate the degree to which you would be interested in seeking professional accreditation as a research administrator.

R55_1 Not at all
R55_1 Mildly
R55_1 Moderately
R55_1 Quite strongly
R55_1 Very strongly
R55_1 Not sure

Q28b. Any other thoughts on accreditation?

R56_1 .................................................................

Q29a. As a University staff member, which of the following options do you most prefer to be known as: (select all that apply)

R57_1 Administrative staff member
R57_2 General staff member
R57_3 Manager
R57_4 University administrator
R57_5 Non-academic staff member
R57_6 Other (please specify below)

Other option.

R58_1 .................................................................

Q29b. Please provide reason/s for your choice/s:

R59_1 .................................................................

Q30a. As a University staff member, which of the following options do you least prefer to be known as: (select all that apply)

R60_1 Administrative staff member
R60_2 General staff member
R60_3 Manager
Section 2 (cont)... Role Responsibilities

Q31... Please provide a brief role description of your current position:

R63_1 ........................................................................................................

Q32a... Was there specific experience required for your current position?

a...Yes

R64_1 ........................................................................................................

b...No

R64_2 ........................................................................................................

Q32b... If Yes, please describe:

R65_1 ........................................................................................................

Q33... What is your level of participation in decisions affecting your area of responsibility?

Typically I have:

- (1) R66_1 No voice
- (2) R66_1 Right of information
- (3) R66_1 Right to be heard/advise
- (4) R66_1 A participation in reaching decisions
- (5) R66_1 Shared responsibility for final decisions
- (6) R66_1 Sole responsibility for final decisions

Q34... What is your level of participation in decisions affecting how changes are implemented in your area of responsibility?

Typically I have:

- (1) R67_1 No voice
- (2) R67_1 Right of information
- (3) R67_1 Right to be heard/advise
- (4) R67_1 A participation in reaching decisions
- (5) R67_1 Shared responsibility for final decisions
- (6) R67_1 Sole responsibility for final decisions
Q35... Please indicate the degree to which decision making in your area is characterised by the following features:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Mildly</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Quite strongly</th>
<th>Very strongly</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a... Decision making is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>based on hierarchy</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i.e. 'top-down')</td>
<td>R68_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b... Decision making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>based on expertise</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and specialist knowledge</td>
<td>R69_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c... Decision making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>based on consensus</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R70_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 3... Workplace Interactions and Communications

Q36... Please indicate what type of working relationship you typically have with the following groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No involvement</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a... Research students</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R71_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b... Academics</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R72_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c... Staff within your area</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R73_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d... Non-academic staff external to your area</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R74_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e... Government funding agencies</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R75_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f... Non-government funding agencies</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R76_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g... DEST R77_1</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h... Business/Industry</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R78_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i... General public</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R79_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q37... Which of your working relationships are the most satisfying and why?
R80_1 .................................................................

Q38... Which of your working relationships are the least satisfying and why?
R81_1 .................................................................

Q39... What one word or phrase would best capture the essence of your engagement with the following groups (.g. formal, informal, supportive...)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R82_1</th>
<th>R83_1</th>
<th>R84_1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a... Research students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b... Academics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c... Staff within your area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q40... What would be your typical form/s of communication with each of the following groups? (select all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Face-to-face</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a... Research students</td>
<td>R85_1</td>
<td>R85_2</td>
<td>R85_3</td>
<td>R85_4</td>
<td>R85_5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b... Academics</td>
<td>R86_1</td>
<td>R86_2</td>
<td>R86_3</td>
<td>R86_4</td>
<td>R86_5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c... Staff within your area</td>
<td>R87_1</td>
<td>R87_2</td>
<td>R87_3</td>
<td>R87_4</td>
<td>R87_5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d... Non-academic staff external to your area</td>
<td>R88_1</td>
<td>R88_2</td>
<td>R88_3</td>
<td>R88_4</td>
<td>R88_5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q41... What is your most preferred mode of communication and why?

Q42... What is your least preferred mode of communication and why?

Section 4... Workplace Opportunities, Expectations and Research Services

Q43... Do you regard the opportunity available to you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Very satisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43a... for advancement or promotion in the Research Services area to be: R96_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43b... for further training and development in the Research Services area to be: R97_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43c... to associate with peers from other universities or research institutions to be: R98_1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q44... In your current role, what do you think you are held most accountable for?

Q45... What do you most strive to achieve in terms of performance in your role and why?

Q46... What aspect of your role is the most difficult to achieve and why?

Q47... What aspect of your role is the least difficult to achieve and why?

Q48... On the basis of your experience, if you were asked to give advice to someone about working in Research Services at your level, what advice would you give in terms of:

a... Minimum entry qualifications?

b... Experience required?

c... Personal characteristics?

d... Professional Development requirements (i.e. ongoing training)?

e... Other, please specify

R103_1

R104_1

R105_1

R106_1

R107_1
Q49a... How much do you think the roles in Research Services have changed over the past 5 years?

- (1) R108_1 Not at all
- (2) R108_1 A little
- (3) R108_1 Some
- (4) R108_1 A lot
- (5) R108_1 Not sure

Q49b... Any other comments?

R109_1 ........................................................................................................

Q50a... Would you still like to be in a Research Services career path in the next 5 years?

- (1) R110_1 Yes
- (2) R110_1 No
- (3) R110_1 Undecided

Q50b... If you answered 'no' to Q50a, which of the following is most likely to occur?
(select all that apply)

- R111_1 Leave university sector
- R111_2 Move into private industry
- R111_3 Move into public service
- R111_4 Concentrate on family
- R111_5 Move to a different area within universities
- R111_6 Retire
- R111_7 Undertake full-time study
- R111_8 Other (please specify below)

R112_1 ........................ other (please specify)

Section 5... Managing and Implementing Change

Q51... To which of the following groups does your university belong?
(select all that apply)

- R113_1 GO8 (Group of Eight)
- R113_2 IRU (Innovative Research Universities Australia)
- R113_3 NGU (New Generational Universities)
- R113_4 ATN (Australian Technology Network)
- R113_5 REG (Regional Universities)
- R113_6 Not sure
- R113_7 Other (please specify below)

R114_1 ........................ other group

Q52... Is your university a 'Research Intensive' university?

a...Yes
R115_1 ........................................................................................................

b...No
Q53... How much do you know about the proposed Research Quality Framework (RQF) policy?

a...Nothing
b...A little
c...Some
d...A lot
e...Not applicable to my position

Q54... What were your primary sources of information about the proposed RQF policy? (select all that apply)

a...Government policy documents
b...Personal interest/networking
c...Line manager
d...University in-house information
e...Professional association
f...Other universities
g...Not applicable

R118_1 other source of information

Q55... What more information do you currently need regarding the RQF?

Q56... In terms of your work experience, where would the RQF rate in terms of its significance when compared to other changes/reforms?

a...Not at all
b...Mildly
c...Moderately
Quite strongly
d...Very strongly

Q57... From your perspective, if there was a more significant change than the RQF, what was it and why?
Q58a... Have you had direct experience at a university of a process similar to the Research Quality Framework (RQF), such as the UK's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)?

- (1) R122_1 Yes
- (2) R122_1 No

Q58b... If Yes, please outline that experience:

R123_1 ..........................................................

Q59... In relation to the proposed implementation of the RQF, how much impact will it likely have on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Level</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very high</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a... your workload?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b... your university?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c... the university sector?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d... academics?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e... research activity?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f... research quality?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q60... How has your University responded to the proposed RQF policy implementation? (select all that apply)

- (1) R130_1 No response to date
- (2) R130_2 General communication (e.g. Staff Newsletters/Website)
- (3) R130_3 Specific communication to staff directly involved (e.g. Research Services)
- (4) R130_4 Undertaken RQF trial
- (5) R130_5 Plan to undertake RQF trial
- (6) R130_6 Targeted staff recruitment
- (7) R130_7 Increased IT infrastructure
- (8) R130_8 Targeted funding/Resources provided
- (9) R130_9 Not sure
- (10) R130_10 Other (please specify below)

Q61... What has been your level of participation in the development of your University's response to the proposed RQF policy?

- (1) R132_1 None
- (2) R132_1 A little
- (3) R132_1 Some
- (4) R132_1 A lot
- (5) R132_1 Not applicable to my position
Q62... What has been your level of participation in the development of your unit's response to the proposed RQF policy?

- (1) R133_1 None
- (2) R133_1 A little
- (3) R133_1 Some
- (4) R133_1 A lot
- (5) R133_1 Not applicable to my position

Q63... Which of the following further activities do you think will be necessary for your University to respond to all of the dimensions of the proposed RQF? (select all that apply)

- a. Initial staff training
- b. Ongoing staff training
- c. Initial policy implementation funding
- d. Ongoing additional funding support
- e. More staff in Research Services
- f. Increased IT infrastructure
- g. Other (please specify below)

Q64... In terms of your answer to Q63, which of the required items are most likely to be provided? (select all that apply)

- a. Initial staff training
- b. Ongoing staff training
- c. Initial policy implementation funding
- d. Ongoing additional funding support
- e. More staff in Research Services
- f. Increased IT infrastructure
- g. Other (please specify below)

Q65... In terms of your answer to Q63, which of the required items are least likely to be provided? (select all that apply)

- a. Initial staff training
- b. Ongoing staff training
- c. Initial policy implementation funding
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ongoing additional funding support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>More staff in Research Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Increased IT infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Other (please specify below)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q66...** What do you think will be your biggest challenge/s in relation to the proposed implementation of the RQF?

**Q67...** Any other comment on any issue?
APPENDIX F
INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR
THE INTERVIEW COMPONENT OF
THE RESEARCH STUDY

The Profile, Role and Contribution of University Research Services Staff
and Their Perspectives on Managing Change in Australian Universities.

You are invited to take part in the research project identified above which is being conducted by
Darlene Sebalj, a PhD candidate within the School of Education at the University of Newcastle.
Ms Sebalj is conducting the research as part of her PhD under the direct supervision of
A/Professor Allyson Holbrook.

Why is this research being done?

Research is integral to the work of universities, and will be crucial to the status of Australian
universities in the future. In order to gain a clear understanding of research in universities we
need to obtain a perspective that recognises the role and contribution of managers and
administrators within research services sections. This group is virtually unresearched in the
literature in higher education.

This research will build a profile of university research services staff, identifying their activities
and roles in the context of a change process. It will develop a picture of the change environment
in which these staff operate and their relationships with other key stakeholders.

For further information please see the Information Sheet regarding the questionnaire component
of this research project.

Who can participate in this research?

All research services staff of Australian publically funded universities are invited to take part in
this research.

For further information please see the Information Sheet regarding the questionnaire component
of this research project.

What choice do you have?

Participation in this research is entirely your choice. Only those people who give their informed
consent will be included in the study. Whether or not you decide to participate, your decision
will not disadvantage you in any way.

If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a
reason.

What would you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in two phone interviews with the
student researcher. The interview questions will draw on your role as a Research
Manager/Administrator in the context of the proposed introduction of the Australian Research
Quality Framework (RQF). Each interview will take no more than 30 minutes to complete and will be scheduled at a time convenient to you. There will be an approximate 3 to 6 month gap between the two interviews.

If you choose to participate in the first phone interview you are not obligated to take part in the second phone interview.

The questions to be asked at the interviews can be found here.

**What are the risks and benefits of participating?**

No physical or psycho-social harm are envisaged in the study. The questions have been carefully designed to ensure that participants are not exposed to potential embarrassment, conflicts of interest or forms of professional indiscretion. The research deliberately avoids any potentially sensitive data about the RQF.

There is no payment or direct benefit for participating in this research.

**How will your privacy be protected?**

Each interview will be audio taped, for further analysis. Participants will be advised that they can stop the tape at any time during the interview. You will be able to review the recording and/or transcript of the interview to edit, erase or withdraw your contribution. The tapes will not have any identifying material on them and the ensuing transcripts will be de-identified through coding (that is, the participant’s name will be converted into a numerical code). The researcher will keep a coding master sheet linking the interviewee to the relevant transcript only to ensure that the correct transcript is sent to the appropriate interviewee for verification. The transcript itself will not have any identifying material included in it.

All transcripts, audio tapes and the coding master sheet will be locked in a steel filing cabinet within the student researcher’s office. Only the student researcher will have access to the filing cabinet and the office location is within the Centre for the Study of Research Training and Impact’s (SORTI) offices at the Mayfield campus of the University of Newcastle. SORTI’s offices are located within a secure building that requires entry codes for authorised access.

The data itself will be kept for the duration of the candidature and candidature examination period. Once this period has expired, then the coding master sheet will be destroyed and only the de-identified material will continue to be housed in the lockable filing cabinet as back up for any ensuing publication material. All material will be destroyed in a confidential manner five years from the end of the candidature period.

**How will the information collected be used?**

The data and related research findings will be reported in a thesis to be submitted for Ms Sebalj’s PhD in early 2008. Articles for publication in higher education and management journals and related publications plus presentations at pertinent conferences and forums will also be drawn from this data set. Individual participants will not be identified in any reports arising from this project.

The study’s progress updates and outcomes will also be made available via SORTI’s website located within the University of Newcastle at: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/sorti/projects10admin.html
**What do you need to do to participate?**

Please read this Information Statement and be sure that you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything that you do not understand, or you have questions, contact the researcher Darlene Sebalj, or the research supervisor A/Professor Allyson Holbrook, as per the contact details above.

If you would like to participate, please complete the consent form and send it as an attachment via email to the researcher at: darlene.sebalj@studentmail.newcastle.edu.au. Please remember to include your contact details in your email so that Darlene can contact you to arrange a time convenient to you for the first interview.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Regards

_________________________________________  ___________________________________________
Darlene Sebalj                                  A/Professor Allyson Holbrook
PhD Candidate                                    Director, SORTI
University of Newcastle                           University of Newcastle

**Complaints about this research**

This project had been approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-236-0606.

Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan, 2308, telephone (02 49216333), email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au
APPENDIX G
CONSENT FORM FOR THE INTERVIEW COMPONENT OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The Profile, Role and Contribution of University Research Services Staff and Their Perspectives on Managing Change in Australian Universities.

Consent Statement:
I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I consent to take part in the interview process; I understand that I only have to answer the questions I wish to address and that I can stop the interview at any time.

I consent to the interview being taped on the understanding that I can stop the tape at any time during the interview and that I can review the recording and/or transcripts of the interview and edit, erase or withdraw my contributions.

I understand that when I participate in the first interview, that I do not have any obligation to proceed to the second interview.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to taking part in the first interview: Yes/No

I consent to taking part in the second interview: Yes/No

Name:__________________________________________________________

Contact details:_____________________________________________________________________

Participant’s signature:_______________________ Date:___________________

Please complete and return as an email attachment to: darlene.sebalj@studentmail.newcastle.edu.au
APPENDIX H
INTERVIEW QUESTION SCHEDULES

The Profile, Role and Contribution of University Research Services Staff and Their Perspectives on Managing Change in Australian Universities.

Questions for Telephone Interview (Interview 1):

Your Role as a Research Services Manager/Administrator

In this interview, I would like to explore your role in Research Services in depth. The interview will also ask some preliminary questions about managing change using the RQF as an example. The interview will take about 30 minutes to complete. While the interview will be semi-structured, you will be welcome to elaborate on the issues or raise new issues at any time during the interview.

1. Could you take me through a brief career profile of your work in research administration so far? What were the turning points or decisions that took you through your career path?

2. What is it like in your job?

3. Describe a typical week at work for you.

4. What do you believe have been the major changes to the work of research services staff over the past 5 years?

5. The questionnaire covered the area of professional identity of research managers and administrators. Can you elaborate on how you see yourself as a member of a profession and how others see you?

6. What typically occurs between research managers/administrators and academics? Can you provide specific examples from your own experience?

7. What typically occurs between research managers/administrators and research students? Can you provide specific examples from your own experience?

8. If you were to bring one thing to the attention of others in your workplace about any aspect of your work or any aspect of research services administration - what would it be?

9. When you first heard about the RQF, what was your reaction?

10. The questionnaire explored the degree to which the RQF was a significant change - from your perspective how significant is it?
Questions for Telephone Interview (Interview 2):

Policy Implementation

In this interview, I would like to concentrate on Research Management and Administration in the context of managing change by concentrating on the RQF policy initiative and its implementation. Similar to the initial interview, this follow-up interview will take about 30 minutes to complete. While the interview will be semi-structured, you are welcome to elaborate on the issues or raise new issues at any time during the interview.

1. How involved have you been in preparing for the RQF to date? Is this typical of others around you?

2. When implementing a new policy in your workplace - what are the various steps involved in the implementation process? Does this apply to the RQF?

3. When implementing change in your workplace - what have you typically found to be the most challenging part of the change process? Are the same types of challenges occurring for the RQF implementation?

4. What will be your role in relation to the RQF once it is implemented?

5. If you were to bring one thing to the attention of others in your workplace about any aspect of implementing a major change like the RQF, what would it be?

6. Imagine 10 years have passed and it is the year 2017, what do you think research administration in your university looks like? What do you think the research activity in your university looks like? What do you think your university looks like?

Have you any other comments on anything you have been asked or anything you would like to add?
APPENDIX I
STATEMENTS OF RESPONSIBILITY

As discussed in Chapter 6, responsibility statements have been constructed from the data contained in participant responses to the survey question on role description. Corresponding demographic detail drawn from the profile and related questions posed in the initial section of the questionnaire have been cross-referenced. The statements together with supporting notes are as follows.

**Deputy Director/Director**

In addition to the broad ‘Statement of Responsibility’ for this staffing subgroup (see Table App 1.1), other factors for consideration are that:

- Central research offices (research services) may also have direct responsibility for graduate research/RHD candidature and scholarships/postgraduate awards administration.
- The functions of ethics compliance and review in most cases come under the management of the respective research office (note at least two universities in Australia have ethics functions which come under the Registrarial section of the university operating through a secretariat). Ethics compliance responsibilities in all cases include human ethics, in most cases animal ethics and to a lesser extent biosafety and/or gene technology, depending on the type of research activity being undertaken by the respective university.
- The Research Director may have a leadership role in the development/negotiation and/or ongoing functioning of their respective university’s CRC/s, large scale joint ventures and/or University Research centres. The respective research service office may or may not be responsible for providing support to same.
- Research commercialisation (or innovation) may come under the rubric of a research office or may come under a different arm of the university such as a separate commercial entity or a business development office (Harman & Harman, 2004). This position may have ultimate responsibility for the research budget for the university or may support the DVC/PVC in this function. This position may also be supported in terms of ongoing financial management and reporting by a business manager/management accountant or similar, as indicated by Subset D – Finance under the position description of ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’.
### Table App I.1 Staffing Subgroup: Deputy Director/Director (n=20, 10% of total participants)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>REPORTING LINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manage the Office of Research (Research Services/Research Unit) that is responsible for legal compliance, ethics compliance (research integrity), grant/contract management and research business development (research income production/ university research capacity), collection and analysis of research metrics. Manage and develop the university’s research budget. Initiate, implement, review and manage support programs for research. Act as main point of contact for the University to external agencies (For example: DEEWR, ARC, NHMRC). Responsibility for the development of policy related to research management and contribution to the strategic research decision-making of the university.</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 10+ for Directors and HEW/HEO 10 for Deputy Directors. (Note: according to the participants’ salary profile if their position title is more aptly reflected as being ‘Manager, Research Services’ as opposed to a ‘Director, Research Services’ – the typical salary level described is HEW/HEO 8/9).</td>
<td>Report to the Vice Chancellor/Deputy Vice Chancellor or Pro-Vice Chancellor/ Faculty Dean or in the case of Deputy Director/s – the Director of Research Office (or equivalent).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RMA (Grants/Finance)

Areas of responsibility common to most responses for this staffing subgroup could not be typified by a single broad ‘Statement of Responsibility’, hence the four separate statements of subsets A to D (see Table App I.2). The four statements reflect the stratification of responsibility and delegation levels of participants as indicated by their responses, which *prima facie* reflect differing salary levels. Such stratification or differentiation in responses may also reflect:

- The size of the employer university’s research funding,
- Research office staffing levels,
- The skill level of individual research services staff, and
- The complexity of the individual working environment.

The broad responsibility statements for subsets A and B of the staffing subgroup ‘RMA (Grants/Finance)’ encompass both post and pre-award functions, although in some instances participants may have indicated responsibility for either post or pre-award activities but not both. Such responsibility may also, for example, be concentrated on research funding submissions, research grant administration for designated faculties or research strengths. Others may have responsibility for administering grants from one or a defined set of granting bodies – for example: ARC, NHRMC, or Discovery.

A distinction can be drawn between three responsibility statements for grants administration. Participant subset A could be described as primarily undertaking a ‘post-office’ function, whereby grant applications are processed with minimum or no input by the research administrator, who in turn provides general grant administration support at a process level as directed. Subset B could be described as ‘adding value – compliance’, whereby the research administrator ensures grant applications meet university and funding body requirements and provide advice to researchers on how such compliance could be achieved, plus promoting potential sources of funds. Contribution to policy development is an added function here.

Participants in subset C could be seen as ‘co-contributors’, whereby they actively seek forms of funding for researchers. They also provide a level of independent review to grant applications and may be seen as ‘grant writing specialists’, moving beyond compliance checking. As indicated, the more senior of these participants are typically managers of a grants team and/or are specialist individuals who concentrate on particular grant schemes (for example: the ARC).
They may also conduct workshops on grantsmanship and provide advice to early career researchers, particularly in grant writing. It would seem that a strategic focus is applied here.

The remaining group of participants – subset D, is made up of business managers/management accountants or similar, who have management and reporting responsibilities for research funding within Research Services or equivalent offices.
Table App I.2 Staffing Subgroup: RMA (Grants/Finance) \((n=53, 27\% \text{ of total participants})\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>REPORTING LINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subset A – Grants</strong> (comprises 10% of participants in this staffing group):</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 4-5</td>
<td>Report to the Manager of Section/Team Leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertise funding opportunities, receive and process research grant applications to be forwarded to external bodies. File creation and management. Administer (funding opportunities or other relevant) database. Responsible for financial administration of grants (for example: raising invoices, paying bills, raising account codes).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subset B – Grants</strong> (comprises 45% of participants in this staffing group):</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 6-7</td>
<td>Report to the Manager of Section/Team Leader or to the Research Director/Head of Research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist researchers with application and assessment process of research funding submissions (pre-award); undertake all aspects of administration of awarded grants (post-award). Ensure all grant applications are compliant to the funding body and to university policy. Responsibility for preparation of discussion papers and other policy documentation related to grants administration and research funding. Disseminate information and advice to researchers on sources of research (internal and external) funding support.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table App I.2 (con’t) Staffing Subgroup: RMA (Grants/Finance) \((n=53, \text{ 27\% of total participants})\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>REPORTING LINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subset C – Grants (comprises 34% of participants in this staffing group):</strong> Responsible for the identification and promotion of research funding opportunities and for the subsequent support of the development of associated research grant applications. Provision of independent lay review of application/proposal documentation including compliance matters (grant writing specialist). Provide strategic advice where appropriate. Present information and give advice on grantsmanship at workshops (or to individual researchers as required). May also be a specialist regarding a particular granting body – for example: ARC funding.</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 8-9</td>
<td>Report to the Manager of Section/Team Leader or to the Research Director/Head of Research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subset D – Finance (comprises 11% of participants in this staffing group):</strong> Manage the budgets and resources for the research division/section/office. Prepare management accounts for university and external funding bodies. Ensure accurate acquittal of external research funds in accordance with accounting standards and to audit requirements.</td>
<td>Range from HEW/HEO 6-7 to HEW/HEO 8-9</td>
<td>Report to the Manager of Section/Team Leader or to the Research Director/Head of Research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students)

Areas of responsibility common to most responses in this staffing subgroup could not be typified by a single statement of responsibility and so instead were grouped under four separate statements (see Table App I.3). These four statements reflect the stratification of responsibility and delegation levels of participants as indicated by their responses, which *prima facie* reflect differing salary levels. Such stratification or differentiation in responses may also reflect:

- The volume of the employer university’s research student enrolments,
- Research office staffing levels,
- Placement of these functions in relation to the organisational structure (within research services or a graduate school for example),
- The skill level of individual research service staff, and
- The complexity of the individual working environment.

In subset E the main function of this staffing group involves all aspects or a component of: the administration of postgraduate candidature; or, the administration of postgraduate (and perhaps undergraduate) scholarships. Participants on higher salary levels may have the added responsibility for managing a team of staff charged with postgraduate student administration and/or scholarships.

In subset F this staffing group may have responsibilities in addition to the broad ‘Statement of Responsibility’ supplied in Table App I.3 and can include:

- Provision of executive support to a Dean of Graduate studies or similar,
- Provision of support for Graduate studies/Research degrees committee,
- Collection and retrieval of data/compilation of reports (for example: DEEWR statistics),
- Maintenance of relevant handbooks/web pages for postgraduate students,
- Management of a student centre for postgraduates/graduates,
- Development/management of relevant databases, and
- Supervision of other administrative staff.
**Table App I.3 Staffing Subgroup: RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students) \(n=37, 19\%\) of total participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>REPORTING LINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subset E – (comprises 22% of participants in this staffing group):</strong></td>
<td>HEW/HEO 4-5</td>
<td>The majority of incumbents report to the Manager of Section/Team Leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Responsibility for ongoing administration of postgraduate students. This may involve responsibility for (one or more of the following):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Processing admissions and enrolment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Processing variations to candidature (for example: upgrades, leave applications, change of project title)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Monitoring student progress (for example: processing annual candidature reports)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Administering examination of theses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AND/OR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Responsibility for ongoing administration of scholarships. This may involve responsibility for (one or more of the following):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Processing scholarship applications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Financial administration (for example: processing scholarship payments, ceasing payments)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Maintenance of relevant scholarships database</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Updating promotional material/information (student handbook or on relevant web page) regarding scholarship schemes</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table App I.3 (con’t) Staffing Subgroup: RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students) ($n=37$, 19% of total participants)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>REPORTING LINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subset F – (comprises 48% of participants in this staffing group)</strong></td>
<td>HEW/HEO 6-7</td>
<td>Report to the Manager of Section/Team Leader and to a lesser extent a Research Director/Head of Research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Responsibility for HDR candidature management and administration. This may involve responsibility for (one or more of the following):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Managing orientation activities</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Information dissemination, admissions and enrolment processes, variations of candidature, reporting, examination, and graduation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- All aspects of international research students candidature (from admission to graduation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Coordinating student/supervisor seminars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Liaison between research students and supervisors and other academic staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Review, update and apply relevant policy and guidelines as appropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AND/OR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Responsibility for scholarship management and administration. This may involve responsibility for (one or more of the following):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Promotion, administration, payments, acquittals, and reporting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ranking (or assistance with ranking) of scholarship applications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Review and update relevant policy and guidelines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table App I.3 (con’t) Staffing Subgroup: RMA (Graduate Studies/Graduate Students) \((n=37, \text{ 19}\% \text{ of total participants})\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>REPORTING LINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Subset G** – (comprises 19% of participants in this staffing group):  
Responsibility for the management of the HDR candidature and/or research scholarship functions of the university (generally includes managing a section/s of staff charged with undertaking administrative functions in these areas). Develop and deliver a program of developmental activities for HDR students. Responsibility for developing and implementing appropriate policies and procedures and acting as the university's resource person and advisor on HDR matters.  
(Note: Given the small sample and lack of detailed convergence in the response given no further information can be provided here without affecting the participants’ anonymity). | HEW/HEO 8-9 | A majority of incumbents report to the Research Director/Head of Research. |
| **Subset H** – (comprises 11% of participants in this staffing group):  
Responsibility for the management of all aspects of HDR student candidature and/or for the administration of university scholarships. Such responsibility may involve management of a Graduate research centre/school and/or a Scholarships office for example.  
(Note: Given the small sample and lack of detailed convergence in the response given no further information can be provided here without affecting the participants’ anonymity). | HEW/HEO 10/10+ | Report to differing levels of senior management. |
RMA (Ethics)

Areas of responsibility common to most responses under this staffing subgroup could not be typified by a single statement of responsibility and so instead were grouped under four separate statements (see Table App I.4). These four statements reflect the stratification of responsibility and delegation levels of participants as indicated by their responses, which *prima facie* reflect differing salary levels. Such stratification or differentiation in responses may also reflect:

- The volume of ethics applications being processed,
- The complexity of the individual university’s research mix requiring, ethics compliance activities (for example: human plus animal plus biosafety ethics),
- Research office staffing levels,
- The skill level of the individual research services staff involved,
- Placement of these functions in relation to the organisational structure (within research services or a secretariat for example), and
- The complexity of the individual working environment.

*Subset K – HEW/HEO Salary 8-9*

The responsibilities outlined in the responses from this group are very similar to the HEW/HEO 6-7 range and it is not possible to establish key differences between the two without further information being provided by the participants or some other form of member checking. That said, there are key comments offered by several participants here that indicate a leadership role being undertaken, which is arguably somewhat removed from the pattern of responses found in the HEW/HEO 6-7 salary range. Examples include: ‘Provide leadership and promote awareness and adherence to (ethics) legislative and regulatory requirements’ (32244) and ‘Facilitate making research happen’ (32103).

Participants at this level may also be coordinating the ethics administration of more than one committee, thereby adding to their responsibility load. Further, it is possible that the volume of ethics applications and associated research intensity of the employer university are factors in determining the higher salary level. A final factor for consideration under this section is that almost all of the HEW/HEO 8-9 participants report directly to a Director, Research office/Head of Research office, as opposed to the HEW/HEO 6-7 salary range of which half report to the next level down of Manager of Section/Team Leader.
**Table App I.4 Staffing Subgroup: RMA (Ethics) (n=21, 11% of total participants)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>REPORTING LINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subset I – (comprises 24% of participants in this staffing group).</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 4-5</td>
<td>A majority of incumbents report to the Manager of Section/Team Leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the Ethics officer/Executive officer by undertaking day-to-day administrative tasks. <strong>AND/OR</strong> Provide administrative support to the Human (Animal or Biosafety) ethics committee. Update relevant research databases as required.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subset J – (comprises 33% of participants in this staffing group).</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 6-7</td>
<td>Report to the Research Director/Head of Research office or to the Manager of Section/Team Leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake the role of Ethics Officer/Executive officer (committee secretary) to (one or more) ethics committees with responsibility for all aspects of (human/animal/biosafety) ethics administration. Ensure that all necessary (for example: human or animal) ethics legislation is adhered to within the university for research and teaching; undertake project/compliance monitoring; policy-planning and implementation; complaints handling/problem resolution plus mandatory reporting to various bodies and agencies. Provision of training and development to researchers; ethics committee members; and postgraduate students regarding ethics applications and related processes, as required.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This may involve responsibility for (one or more of the following):</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The organisation of annual inspections of animal houses and facilities (and in some circumstances – the provision of advice and training on matters relating to care, use and welfare of animals).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Supervision of administrative support staff.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table App I.4 (con’t) Staffing Subgroup: RMA (Ethics) (n=21, 11% of total participants)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>REPORTING LINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subset K (comprises 33% of participants in this staffing group).</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 8-9</td>
<td>Report to the Research Director/Head of Research office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The responsibilities outlined in the responses from this group are very similar to the HEW/HEO 6-7 range and it is not possible to establish key differences between the two without further information being provided by the participants or some other form of member checking. See additional comments below.</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 10-10+</td>
<td>Report to Senior Executive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subset L – (comprises 10% of participants in this staffing group).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility to direct an Ethics office or Research Integrity office which is charged with the administration of all ethics committees of a university and associated activities. (Note: Given the small sample no further information can be provided here without affecting the participants’ anonymity).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
RMA (Data/IT Systems)

Areas of responsibility common to most responses under this staffing subgroup cannot be typified by a single statement of responsibility and so instead are grouped under four separate statements (see Table App I.5). These four statements reflect the stratification of responsibility and delegation levels of participants as indicated by their responses, which *prima facie* reflect differing salary levels. Such stratification or differentiation in responses may also reflect:

- Sophistication of university information management systems,
- The extent to which university research information is captured electronically,
- Research office staffing levels,
- The skill level of the individual research services staff involved,
- Placement of IT functions in relation to the organisational structure (within research services proper or as an out-posted placement from an IT department), and
- The complexity of the individual working environment.

For subset O, the responses from this group are very similar to the HEW/HEO 6-7 range, with an added sophistication in the framing of their work responsibilities. The broad responsibility statement provided is designed to reflect this difference.
### Table App I.5 Staffing Subgroup: RMA (Data/IT Systems) \( (n=31, \text{16% of total participants}) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>REPORTING LINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subset M – (comprises 10% of participants under this position title). Undertake data collection/entry/analysis of the university’s research activities. Provide general IT support and web maintenance and development. <em>(This position may also have responsibility for managing/undertaking the annual DEEWR collection of university research publications).</em></td>
<td>HEW/HEO 4-5</td>
<td>Report to the Research Director/Head of Research office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subset N – (comprises 45% of participants under this position title). Responsible for compiling reports on university research activities such as: the university’s publications collection; ABS reports; HERDC reports; annual research reports, and ad hoc internal and external data reports. <strong>AND/OR</strong> Manage (and/or provide ongoing support to) the research services information management systems. <em>This may include responsibility for:</em></td>
<td>HEW/HEO 6-7</td>
<td>The majority of incumbents report to the Research Director/Head of Research office with the remainder reporting to the Manager of a Section/Team Leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research data analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Supporting network and server administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Web development and maintenance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Supporting in-house databases and IT applications <em>(for example: assisting staff with GAMS and related grant application mechanisms)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Preparation for new system requirements <em>(for example: the advent of the RQF and associated data requirements)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The implementation/testing and training of staff in the use of in-house databases.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table App I.5 (con’t) Staffing Subgroup: RMA (Data/IT Systems) (n = 31, 16% of total participants)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subset O – (comprises 39% of participants under this position title).</th>
<th>HEW/HEO 8-9</th>
<th>HEW/HEO 10/+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for the promotion, demonstration, support, upgrade and enhancement/s of IT applications involved with university research activities. Develop database implementation solutions, process and workflows. Develop web-based solutions which support the university’s research enterprise. Responsibility for compiling statistical data and conducting data analyses (including benchmarking data) as required for statutory and ad hoc reports. (This position may also have responsibility for client support).</td>
<td></td>
<td>The majority of incumbents report to the Research Director/Head of Research office with the remainder reporting to the Manager of a Section/Team Leader.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subset P – (comprises 6% of participants under this position title).
Manage a team of staff responsible for collecting, validating, storing and analysing research management information.
(Note: Given the small sample no further information can be provided here without affecting the participants’ anonymity). | | |
RMA (Contracts/Consulting/External Relations/Research Development)

Close inspection of the role statements provided by participants in this staffing subgroup amalgam indicates that they are predominantly working either on research contracts or the development of their respective university’s research capacity and capability. However, these two areas are likely to cross-over in an operational sense, that is, the contracts function may be involved with the commercialisation of an activity, whilst the development function at some point usually involves contract negotiations. The two-tiered broad ‘Statement of Responsibility’, provided in Table App I.6, focus on these two identified core functions.
Table App I.6 Staffing Subgroup: RMA (Contracts/Consulting/External Relations/Research Development) \((n = 10, 5\% \text{ of total participants})\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>SALARY LEVEL</th>
<th>REPORTING LINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Development#</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 8-9</td>
<td>Report to the Research Director/Head of Research office or to the Manager of Section/Team Leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve research capability and capacity, by working closely with lead researchers, plus existing and potential research partners. Develop strategies to increase support for, and awareness of, existing and emerging research strengths within the University.</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 10/+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase external research grant income through proactive research development activities. Provide training and encourage the engagement of academic staff in increasing their research activity.</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 10/+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote and facilitate the commercialisation of research activities.</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 10/+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Two identified levels of responsibility as reflected in corresponding salary level).</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 6-7</td>
<td>Report to the Research Director/Head of Research office or to the Manager of Section/Team Leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracts*</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 10/+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate the: review; negotiation; signature; and any administrative aspects, of research contracts.</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 10/+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review, draft and negotiate research contracts.</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 6-7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*Two identified levels of responsibility as reflected in corresponding salary level).</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 6-7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Note: Given the small sample no further information can be provided for this staffing group without affecting the participants’ anonymity).</td>
<td>HEW/HEO 6-7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RMA (General/Operational/Planning)

Given the amalgamated nature of this staffing subgroup \((n=14, 7\% \text{ of total participants})\), only very general information can be provided, firstly, so as not to affect the participants’ anonymity and secondly, the varied nature of these participants’ responsibilities reduces the commonality available for the construction of a ‘typical’ responsibility statement. What can be said is that:

- Salary levels cross the whole spectrum from HEW/HEO 2-3 to HEW/HEO 10+
- Staff tended to have responsibilities which cross-over more than one section of a traditional research office (that is: they cross-over Ethics and Data/IT Systems – note illustrative examples only).
- This heading also includes several research services staff that have not provided sufficient information regarding their brief role statement to place them under a more defined heading and have therefore been classified under ‘general’.
RMA (Policy/Quality/RQF/Projects)

Given the mixed nature of this category of staff \(n= 8, 4\% \text{ of total participants}\) only very general information can be provided, firstly, so as not to affect the participants’ anonymity and secondly, the varied nature of these participants’ responsibilities reduces the commonality available for the construction of a ‘typical’ responsibility statement. What can be said is that:

- A majority of these staff members are HEW/HEO 6-7 salary level with a predominant reporting line to the Research Director/Head of the Research office,
- Project management activities undertaken by members of this grouping may be quite general or they may be specific appointments employed to undertake, for example, preparation activities resulting from changing government policies – such as the advent of the RQF.

A large proportion of these staff members provide executive level support to the work of the Research Director and/or research office in a variety of areas.

REFERENCES

APPENDIX J
CODING NOTES FOR QUESTIONS ON
PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY
EXPECTATIONS

1. Accuracy
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding accuracy of processing/attention to detail/accuracy in communication/data accuracy/checking for errors and related matters.

2. Administering (Processing) (ROLE FUNCTION)
Coding Note: Captures comments regarding any forms of administration/administering/processing any activity within a research office setting. Does not include activities where the words ‘managing’, ‘manage’ or ‘coordinate’ are used – in that instance code under ‘managing’ or ‘staff management’.

3. Assessment and Analysis (ROLE FUNCTION)
Coding Note: Captures comments regarding any form of undertaking involving assessing or analysing processes/applications/data/guidelines/opportunities. Does not include problem solving which has its own coding node.

4. Brand Protection and Enhancement
Coding Note: Captures any comments relating to protecting/supporting/enhancing image/brand/marketing/reputation of the university/the research office/work team and related material.

5. Change Activities and Processes (ROLE FUNCTION)
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding change of any nature – changing processes/changing staff/changing culture and related material.

6. Committee Support (ROLE FUNCTION)
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding committee work or supporting the work of a committee/s.

7. Communication
Coding Note: Captures any comments where communicating and/or communication is mentioned – includes negotiation/liaison. Does not include when participant is specifically communicating a procedure/process/policy (information dissemination) or providing advice (providing advice).

8. Compliance
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding any compliance matters vis-à-vis all forms of internal and external policies/processes, including comments relating to potential or actual
research misconduct (that is, instances of lack of compliance). Also includes regulations, guidelines and related material.

9. Contribution and Value-Adding
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding contribution/contributing/facilitation – to be used when a contribution to any aspect of the research endeavour is commented on or inferred. Intended to capture where a more ‘partnership’ type of relationship is discussed, as opposed to a more 'service' orientated one.

10. Effectiveness
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding being effective and/or effectiveness in job/action/policy/procedure and related material.

11. Efficiency (Including Time Management and Deadlines)
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding efficiency/ timeliness/timely/meeting deadlines/time management/quick response/fast turn around and similar.

12. Executive Support (ROLE FUNCTION)
Coding Note: Captures any activities relating to the administrative and executive support of a senior staff member/s.

13. Expertise (Knowledge Management) (ROLE FUNCTION)
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding keeping abreast of changing guidelines/policies/processes and applying this information in the work sphere. This includes passing on new knowledge to internal or external parties or stakeholders. Includes expertise in the field/policies plus any related material.

14. External Relations
Coding Note: Captures any comments indicating the working relationship between the individual/research office/university and others external to the university.

15. Finance (ROLE FUNCTION)
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding finance/finance matters/budget and related matters.

16. HDR Student and Research Training (ROLE FUNCTION)
Coding Note: Captures any form of training or educating of HDR students and researchers regarding research matters led or supported by Research Services staff. This includes the preparation and/or development of research education and training policy or guidelines.

17. Information Dissemination
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding the communication of policy/ processes/systems or related to internal or external parties and stakeholders. This includes the promotion of grant/funding opportunities.
18. Interconnectivity
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding processing connections and work interactions between research office staff and others.

19. IT System (ROLE FUNCTION)
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding IT systems including IT infrastructure and related material. (Intended to capture responses regarding system level IT related issues as opposed to the node 'records management', which captures responses regarding databases and similar).

20. Job Satisfaction (Achievement)
Coding Note: Captures any comments relating to sense of job satisfaction (or otherwise), sense of achievement, work satisfaction, pride in work, enjoying work (or otherwise) and related material.

21. Managing (Resources/Systems/Processes) (ROLE FUNCTION)
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding any forms of managing/management/coordination of any activity within a research office setting. Does not include material regarding ‘staff management’, which is captured separately.

22. Organisational Culture
Coding Note: Captures comments which specifically state or infer a work/organisational/approach or culture, whether present or desired, with the exception of those responses specific to staff development or customer service approach. Code the latter to ‘contribution and value-adding’ or ‘staff development’ as appropriate.

23. Performance Expectations and Outcomes
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding: performance measures; performance outcomes; performance targets; outcomes; performance expectations; work expectations; KPIs and, related material.

24. Policy/Process/Procedure (ROLE FUNCTION) (Development/Enhancement/Implementation)
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding policy, processes or procedures, particularly in relation to the development, implementation or enhancement of same.

25. Political Landscape
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding political terrain of work environment/commentary, which indicates organisational politics or wider sector politics/working constraints or a political nature and related material.
26. Problem Solving (Including Complaints Handling) (ROLE FUNCTION)

Coding Note: Any form of problem solving or seeking solutions to problems in the workplace and includes proactivity to avoid or minimise potential problems.

27. Professionalism (Including Reputation and Accountability)

Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding Profession/Professional/Professionalism, including comments on reputation and accountability. Committed staff/dedicated staff/motivated staff/competence/competencies, as well as work and personal accountabilities, are included under this coding node.

28. Providing Advice (Including Feedback)

Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding providing or presenting advice relating to all aspects of research administration work to any and all internal or external parties or stakeholders. This includes the interpretation of policy or research funding guidelines or related information.

29. Recognition (Including Respect)

Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding profile raising or related issues (including recognition or lack of recognition) regarding the work of the research office or of research administrators or of research administration itself. Includes commentary regarding respect for the individual/work and related material.

30. Records Management and Maintenance (Including Data Integrity and Quality) (ROLE FUNCTION)

Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding records management/database entry/management/data quality/data integrity/spreadsheet work and related material. Includes web based material/information/management.

31. Reporting (ROLE FUNCTION)

Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding any and all forms of reporting and reports.

32. Resourcing (ROLE FUNCTION)

Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding resourcing issues – either in staff/systems/funding and related material.

33. Service

Coding Note: Captures all comments regarding customer or client service and includes service delivery/helpfulness/support and related material. Where a service relationship is inferred or stated as opposed to a more 'partnership' mode. Coded here are all references which show a work ethos or an approach to work or responsibility, which can be best described as providing a 'service to others'.

34. Staff Development (ROLE FUNCTION)

Coding Note: Captures all comments regarding any form of staff development or skills development undertaken, required, provided or not provided.
35. Staff Management (ROLE FUNCTION)
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding managing/coordinating/leading – staff members.

36. Strategic Functions (Organising and Planning) (ROLE FUNCTION)
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding strategy/strategic/planning/organising/forward planning (or lack there-of) and related material.

37. Team Work
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding team work/staff team/work team/team building and related material.

38. University Executive (Senior Management)
Coding Note: Captures any mention of university executive including senior staff or specifically named titles such as DVC/PVC R and related material.

39. Work Quality (Including Performance Reviews)
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding quality of work/level of performance/excellence/excellent work/high level of work and related matters. Excludes references to data quality which are captured under Records Management and comments regarding excellence in client service which is captured under the nodes: ‘Contribution and Value-Adding’ or ‘Service’.

40. Workload
Coding Note: Captures any mention of work load and/or amount of work (either too much or not enough).

41. Workplace Relations
Coding Note: Captures any comments regarding the working relationship between the individual and others within the university. Also includes comments regarding the interactions between the research office and other groups, specifically academics (researchers).
APPENDIX K

RQF POLICY DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

Antecedents, Developments and Parallel Policies: Ministerial Announcements, Reviews and Reports

(Includes the study’s research data collection phase timeline plus changes to UK RAE, University groupings and Ministerial Appointments.)


Dec 1999 *Knowledge & Innovation: A Policy Statement on Research and Research Training* (Kemp, 1999) government’s policy statement from which the Institutional Grant Scheme (IGS) (replacing the earlier Research Quantum scheme) and the Research Training Scheme (RTS) emerged. Both of these schemes were enacted from 2002.


Nov 2000 *The Chance to Change* Final Report by the then Australian Chief Scientist’s Review of Australia’s innovation capacity (Batterham, 2000).

Jan 2001 *Backing Australia’s Ability. An Innovation Action Plan for the Future* a five year innovation plan launched by Prime Minister John Howard (Howard, 2001).

Sept 2001 *Universities in Crisis* Report from the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee. (Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, 2001) Senate backed inquiry into the ‘capacity of public institutions to meet Australian Higher Education needs’.

(DETYA becomes DEST).


Jul 2002 Ministerial release of discussion paper: *Varieties of Excellence: Diversity, Specialisation and Regional Engagement in Higher Education* (Nelson, 2002b) (heralds the start of the ‘diversity’ agenda referred to by research participants expanded in DEST’s *Building University Diversity* released in March 2005).


May 2004 Government’s response to the External Reference Groups report on assessing the Knowledge and Innovations reforms is released (DEST, 2004c).


(May 2005 AVCC backs Federal Government’s development of the RQF asking for a three year introduction and increased research funding in its report: Enhancing Australia’s Core Research Capacity – Developing a Research Quality Framework: the AVCC Proposal (AVCC, 2005).

May 2005 Ministerial release of The Research Quality Framework: Assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia. Advanced Approaches Paper (DEST, 2005c).*


Jun 2005 Summary of Outcomes from National Stakeholder Forum (DEST, 2005e) this summary included details of the three working groups established to work through the RQF development detail.


[Sept 2005 AVCC threatens to withdraw support of the RQF following the Minister’s surprise announcement that ARC and NHMRC funding may be included in the RQF process (O'Keefe & Illing, 2005)].

[Oct 2005 Fault lines widen in AVCC – G08 pushes coherent agenda different to ATN and IRU (Marginson, 2005)].

Jan 2006 The Hon Julie Bishop MP appointed to the role of Minister for Education, Science & Training (DEST, 2006b).

Feb 2006 New Minister indicates that work on the RQF will continue (Illing & O'Keefe, 2006).

Feb 2006 National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy: Strategic Roadmap (NCRIS Committee, 2006). Government planning tool designed to inform Australia’s strategic infrastructure investments with a focus on developing research capacity – arose from Backing Australia’s Ability reform.

UK – Mar 2006 – Britain’s Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown announces ‘radical overhaul of Britain’s RAE’ (Johnston, 2006) with a more streamlined metrics system to be used in its place (HM Treasury, 2006).


# 12/9/2006 Research Online Survey launched.


# 10/10/2006 Research First Round Interviews Commenced.


# 30/11/06 Research Online Survey Closed.

Dec 2006 Ministerial announcement of $87M in grants to support the implementation of the first cycle of the RQF (DEST, 2006c).

(2007 New Generation Universities (NGU) group disbands (Australian Education Network, 2011)).

# 12/2/2006 Research Second Round Interviews Commenced.

Feb 2007 Ministerial Announcement of RQF Reference Committee (DEST, 2007c).

# 7/3/2006 Research First Round Interviews Concluded.


[May 2007 Universities Australia is formed as the new peak body for Australia’s 39 universities formed out of the AVCC following an August 2006 Review of the AVCC (Universities Australia, 2011)].

Aug 2007 Minister announcement of $23M in grants to assist universities in implementing RQF (DEST, 2007b).


(Dec 2007 G08 secretariat relocated to Canberra.)

UK – 22/11/2007 – Proposed RAE Replacement the Research Excellence Framework (REF) was released for consultation (HEFCE, 2007).

Dec 2007 Prime Minister Kevin Rudd assumed office heralding a change in federal government.

21 Dec 2007 Senator the Hon Kim Carr, Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research announced the cessation of the RQF (Carr, 2007).

(DEST becomes DEEWR)

26 Feb 2008 Ministerial Announcement of the RQF replacement – the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative to be developed by the ARC in conjunction with the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR, 2008).
REFERENCES (Appendix K only)


## APPENDIX L
### OVERVIEW OF RQF PREPARATIONS DRAWN FROM THE INTERNET SITES OF ALL AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES (MARCH-MAY 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University#</th>
<th>Material available about the RQF on internet website.</th>
<th>Date Accessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. University of Melbourne</strong></td>
<td>Information regarding DEST milestones and build up to RQF on web site, evidence of open forums held for staff and students on the RQF and the shaping of the university’s and GO8’s response to the RQF. RQF is to be the seeming catalyst or the manner in which the university will sort out which research group/area will be invested in, in terms of their longer term future and success.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. University of Sydney</strong></td>
<td>Web site information for staff highlighting the RQF official website and milestones. Establishment of a high level panel to advise DVC (R&amp;I) on how to prepare for the RQF.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Monash University</strong></td>
<td>Paper written on the implications of the RQF for Monash is restricted access to Monash staff only. Evidence of trialling.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. University of Queensland</strong></td>
<td>UQ is undertaking a round of peer-review exercises aimed at collecting detailed information to assist the university in preparing for the RQF. Entitled ‘2006 Research Quality Assessments’ (2006UQRA) – restricted access. There is clearly a high level of awareness and activity occurring in terms of RQF preparation.</td>
<td>14/05/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. University of New South Wales</strong></td>
<td>Evidence that UNSW will not run any RQF trials unless the RQF is confirmed to be proceeding. Evidence of presentations, discussions and forums.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Australian National University</strong></td>
<td>Evidence of seminars and trialling. A wide range of material regarding the RQF and related issues are available via restricted access.</td>
<td>17/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. University of Western Australia</strong></td>
<td>Evidence of forums, presentations on the RQF.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. University of Adelaide</strong></td>
<td>Website information for staff highlighting the RQF official website and milestones. Proactive appointment of a Director of RQF. Running commentary on RQF, high level of RQF related information available.</td>
<td>17/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. University of Newcastle (note excluded from study)</td>
<td>Website detailing the potential RQF and the ongoing DEST discussions and papers. The site also details the university’s approach to the RQF including the creation of two working parties – the RQF strategy planning group and the RQF data management group. Online CV software being developed in anticipation of the RQF information requirements. Trial RQF to be conducted in 2006 together with information sessions.</td>
<td>5/05/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Flinders University of South Australia</td>
<td>Paper written on the implications of the RQF for Flinders – restricted access to Flinders staff only.</td>
<td>17/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. University of Wollongong</td>
<td>PVC appointment including a key role as Chair of the RQF Working Party. RQF related documents via restricted access.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Queensland University of Technology</td>
<td>There is an RQF website listed but it is only internally available. There is an RQF Coordinator within the Office of Research. (Part of the ATN network of universities plus Murdoch undertaking a large scale RQF trial designed to analyse limitations in central administrative practices, as well as highlight process difficulties for the researchers and centres involved. Implementation of new software to assist with reporting plus investment in University indicators). The comprehensive RQF trial was conducted during July-Oct 2005.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. University of Tasmania</td>
<td>Discussion paper from the PVC Research on the RQF and comments on the similarity to the RQF and UTAS' ‘Research Quality Index’ approach. Ongoing updates provided to staff.</td>
<td>17/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Macquarie University</td>
<td>Details on how Macquarie is responding and has responded to the RQF and its development. Breakdown of the potential RQF model. Plus indications that the university is working to ensure they have the data management capacity to meet the requirements of the RQF when it is implemented. A power point presentation indicates that seminars have been held discussing the potential implications of the RQF for Macquarie. Possible RQF trial/modeling in conjunction with IRU universities mid-2006.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Charles Darwin University</td>
<td>Updates in Research Bulletin regarding RQF developments are all that can be seen from the internet site. The ECU website mentions CDU as being one of 10 NGU universities participating in an RQF trial, with ‘research active’ only staff being involved. The deadline for inputs was end of February, 2006.</td>
<td>17/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Griffith University</td>
<td>Evidence of forums, presentations and watching briefs, key appointments and probable trialling. RQF material restricted to Griffith University staff.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. La Trobe University</td>
<td>Key RQF-related appointments made, newsletters/updates, awareness raising activities and information.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18. Curtin University of Technology</strong></td>
<td>Detailed information about the ATN RQF trial (including Murdoch), indicated that the trial has been conducted in July/Oct 2005 period assessing Jan 2002 to Aug 2005 inclusive. The unit of assessment for the trial was an institutionally defined research cluster containing at least 5 and preferably 10 or more research active staff (excluding adjunct staff and research students). Has an ‘RQF Officer’ – one of four universities to have appointed a dedicated RQF staff member at the time of review.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19. University of Technology, Sydney</strong></td>
<td>Information available which indicated that the university was part of the ATN network of universities, plus Murdoch undertaking a large scale RQF trial designed to analyse limitations in central administrative practices, as well as highlight process difficulties for the researchers and centres involved. Implementation of new software to assist with reporting plus investment in University indicators. Links also to official DEST website and related material.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>20. James Cook University</strong></td>
<td>Set up of a 2006 Research Advancement Program (RAP) with the express aim of improving the University’s research performance in the RQF. After initial selection process, clusters of researchers were asked to prepare business plans in terms of the RAP and in light of the RQF. RQF is assumed to have a profound potential to affect Australian universities leading to possible stratification (teaching-only universities). JCU indicates a determination to strategically position itself to remain as a research intensive university. $1.5M per year for 3 yrs is being provided as development monies funding RAP. Full details of RAP were available on the intranet site. Business plans were due at the end of Nov 2005.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>21. Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology</strong></td>
<td>Evidence of trialling, and assistance being given to areas in positioning themselves in relation to the RQF. RMIT is indicated in Curtin University of Technology’s website as being part of the ATN (plus Murdoch) comprehensive RQF trial conducted during July-Oct 2005.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>22. Deakin University</strong></td>
<td>Established an RQF steering committee, trial RQF assessment with Swinburne University, appointed six new research associate professors in existing research priority areas, review of staff/staffing structure and research groupings, senior managers conference/workshops/seminars. Published timetable of planned preparatory events for 2006. Internal publications regarding RQF not accessible by public.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>23. University of South Australia</strong></td>
<td>Part of ATN RQF trials. Appointed an ‘RQF Officer’ within Research &amp; Innovation Services. Only one of four Universities to do so as the time the review was conducted (QUT has an ‘RQF Coordinator’, University Adelaide has a ‘Director, RQF’, and Curtin has an ‘RQF Officer’).</td>
<td>17/03/2006</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>24. Murdoch University</strong></td>
<td>Website detailing links to DEST material on the RQF, IRU material on the RQF plus RQF trial guidelines as Murdoch is the only IRU university participating in the ATN RQF trial.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>25. Swinburne University of Technology</strong></td>
<td>Paper written on an action plan in relation to the RQF but it is restricted access to Swinburne staff only. RQF developmental milestones highlighted and linked to intranet web site. Deakin university website indicates that Swinburne is undertaking a joint RQF trial with Deakin.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>26. University of Western Sydney</strong></td>
<td>Website information for staff highlighting the RQF official website and milestones. Although not mentioned on the UWS internet site, NGU universities according to SCU website are undertaking preliminary RQF type trials to assess quality, impact and esteem measures of research. The NGU assessment is to familiarise universities and their staff with the RQF agenda and procedures/to foreshadow likely RQF outcomes and to provide data to help in planning for the RQF.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>27. The University of New England</strong></td>
<td>Indication in minutes of a research committee meeting in which UNE had decided that the implementation of a ‘teaching only’ policy would not be pursued as research seen as crucial to UNE reputation. No other public documents – possibly RQF related material on intranet.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>28. Victoria University of Technology (now Victoria University)</strong></td>
<td>Similar to Southern Cross University – VU’s web site indicates that there will be a preliminary RQF assessment exercise across nine participating universities. The assessment will cover quality, impact and esteem measures of research.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>29. Edith Cowan University</strong></td>
<td>Background information about the RQF and RAF (Research Accessibility Framework) and the development and aims of the RQF. Details on the NGU RQF trial in February 2006. Interestingly of the 10 NGU members it mentions Charles Darwin being involved rather than the University of Southern Qld. RQF presentation plus RQF trial pro formas and related material publicly available on this site. The website indicates that robustness and evidence are essential guides as the ATN and IRUA groups are ‘committed to ensuring both quality and impact appear in the final RQF to be implemented’. Website also has an extensive question and answer section on the RQF trial.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>30. Southern Cross University</strong></td>
<td>According to SCU website eight to nine NGU universities are undertaking preliminary RQF type trials to assess quality, impact and esteem measures of research. The NGU assessment is to familiarise universities and their staff with the RQF agenda and procedures/to foreshadow likely RQF outcomes and to provide data to help in planning for RQF. Details regarding trial design publicly available.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>31. University of Canberra</strong></td>
<td>Website information for staff highlighting the RQF official website and milestones. Although not mentioned on the UC internet site NGU universities according to SCU website are undertaking preliminary RQF type trials to assess quality, impact and esteem measures of research. The NGU assessment is to familiarise universities and their staff with the RQF thinking and procedures/to foreshadow likely RQF outcomes and to provide data to help in planning for RQF.</td>
<td>17/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>32. Charles Sturt University</strong></td>
<td>Detailed powerpoint presentation about the RQF and its possible effect on CSU. Includes VC aims for ranking position and proposed preparation actions with a detailed research plan, KPIs and targets. $50k put aside for preparation for RQF. Includes comparison tables across other like universities in terms of research performance. Strategies to increase research productivity with details on the criteria for being a research productive staff member are given.</td>
<td>15/05/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>33. Australian Catholic University</strong></td>
<td>Nothing indicated on internet web site regarding RQF. NGU universities according to SCU website are undertaking preliminary RQF type trials to assess quality, impact and esteem measures of research. The ECU website mentions ACU as being one of 10 NGU universities being involved in an RQF trial with ‘research active’ only staff being involved. The deadline for inputs was the end of Feb, 2006. The NGU assessment is to familiarise universities and their staff with the RQF agenda and procedures/ to foreshadow likely RQF outcomes and to provide data to help in planning for RQF.</td>
<td>17/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>34. University of Southern Queensland</strong></td>
<td>Minutes of a meeting of Research and Higher Degree committee dated 27/10/05 indicated the appointment of a small steering committee charged with continuing the work on investigating the implications of the RQF and third stream funding issues on USQ. This university is also part of the NGU group which had indicated RQF trials but none of this material was referred to via the USQ’s internet – assume material is on their intranet. The ECU website mentions 10 NGU universities being involved in an RQF trial with ‘research active’ only staff being involved. The deadline for inputs was the end of February, 2006. Of note Charles Darwin University was listed as one of the 10 whilst USQ was not however USQ and not CDU were mentioned at the time on the AVCC site as being an ‘NGU’ member.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>35. University of Ballarat</strong></td>
<td>Information about the RQF plus a section highlighting Ballarat’s research performance was publicly available. Minutes indicated the establishment of an RQF working party plus discussions on Ballarat participating in the NGU RQF trials.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>36. Central Queensland University</strong></td>
<td>RQF self-assessment questionnaire with a deadline of 31/1/2006 back to the Office of Research. Part of the NGU RQF trialling. Provided detailed breakdown of how the trial is to be conducted and the actual assessment proforma itself.</td>
<td>14/03/2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Website indicated a briefing paper on the RQF by the VC plus a RUBIC funded initiative of USC, UNE, University Newcastle, and Massey University to create research infrastructure in regional universities in the areas of e-research and e-learning. This initiative they link to the aims of the RQF and RAF (Research Accessibility Framework) in terms of research accessibility in context of distributed research information networks. Assumed this university is part of the NGU RQF trial but this is not indicated on their internet site. USC’s Learning and Teaching Plan 2005-2007 has a section in it discussing the RQF indicating that there is widespread and very serious implications on universities but ‘none more than this (USC) one’. Pointed to increased thrust in further developing the teaching-research nexus and other actions.

#The numbering system used in this table orders universities from highest to lowest overall university research performance during the period 1998-2002 using the ranking system devised by Valadkhani and Worthington (2005, p. 13).

REFERENCES