

The Association of Tourism in Higher Education

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# Guidelines

No. 11



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## Introduction

Guidelines 11 is intended to contribute to making visible the extent and quality assessment of research in tourism studies submitted by UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to the Research Assessment Exercise 2001 (RAE2001). In the run up to the RAE2001 the forerunner to the ATHE, the NLG, made consistent and repeated demands for more visibility for tourism studies. These attempts to influence the structure and process of the RAE 2001 had little impact and the published results of RAE2001 completely obscure the extent of research in tourism studies in UK universities. Some recently published subject panel reports do acknowledge the existence of the subject (UoA 43, UoA69) but the structure of the panel reports is inconsistent with regards to identifying subject coverage. The Executive Committee of ATHE took the view that this situation was unhelpful to HEIs, to the subject community and to external audiences, such as the national tourist boards, and commissioned research in order to redress this matter.

## Methodology

The lack of visibility for tourism studies in the structure of the RAE 2001 presented difficulties for members of the subject community and the ATHE HEI members (Botterill, 2003). It also presented several methodological challenges in conducting this research. The study that is reported in this Guideline was made possible only because, for the first time in the RAE's history, the submission of each HEI was made available in the public domain on the HERO web site (<http://www.hero.ac.uk/rae/>). HEI submissions to the RAE 2001 included a section that identified the research output of named researchers (RA2) and the HERO web site incorporates a search facility. It therefore becomes possible to interrogate within any of the 69 UoAs for research output that incorporates particular words or combinations of words. Such a search locates research output where the search term is included in **any** field of the research output citation. In order that the results of this research are not misrepresented in interpretation it is important that the interrogation procedure of the HERO web site used in this study is fully reported.

Several stages of the interrogation procedure can be identified. A list of universities known to be engaging in tourism studies was compiled

from the ATHE membership list and the collective tacit knowledge of the members of the ATHE executive committee. The list was kept under revision for several months and where necessary contact was made with a university to confirm, or otherwise, the submission of tourism studies to the RAE 2001. Units of Assessment (UoA) were assigned to each institution as they were confirmed and a key word search was made of the relevant Staff and Outputs section under the 'View by Institution' and 'View by Unit of Assessment' facilities of the HERO web site. In the case of some HEIs this meant the interrogation of several UoAs. The selection of the key words used in the search is, obviously, critical to the validity of the results generated. We adopted the same list of key words as were used in a study of PhDs relating to tourism studies (Botterill, Gale and Haven, forthcoming). These were: holiday, holidaymaker, holidays, tourism, tourist, tourists, travel, visitor, visitors. This deliberately conservative list of key words was applied against the full citation of every research output thereby identifying output where any of the words occurred in any of the article, journal, chapter, or monograph citations included in the RA2. A count of the output and the number of staff submitting the identified output was recorded. These data were supplemented by a manual count of the total number of outputs submitted by the HEI in any UoA where tourism studies output was identified.

## **Results**

The results are reported in Table 1.

## **Limitations**

The comprehensiveness of this approach to the question of the visibility of research in tourism studies in the RAE2001 as defined by the procedure described above depends on the primary identification of all HEIs submitting relevant research output. It was not possible within the resources available for the study to search for the terms across every HEI submission. It is still possible therefore that not all tourism studies research output returned in the RAE2001 under RA2 was captured by our procedure. *[See for example Tribe, J. (in press) The RAE-ification of tourism research in the UK, International Journal of Tourism Research.]*

**Table 1 An Analysis of the Outcomes of the RAE 2001 for Tourism Studies**

	Unit of Assessment	RAE Score	*Total Outputs in UoA Submission	*Number of Tourism-related outputs in UoA Submission	Proportion of total output identified as Tourism (%)	*Number of academics producing tourism outputs
<b>Named Specialist Centres</b>						
CELTs North London	Business	3a	48	36	75	12
International Tourism Research Inst., Luton	Business	4	26	26	100	7
<b>Included with UoAs - England</b>						
Birmingham	Public Policy	4	216	6	3	2
Bournemouth	Business	3a	46	24	52	7
<i>Bradford</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>
Brighton	Business	3a	99	12	12	5
Buckinghamshire Chilterns UC	Sports Related	3b	10	5	50	2
Canterbury Christchurch UC	Sports Related	3b	27	6	22	2
<i>Coventry</i>	<i>Geography</i>	<i>3a</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>
Derby	Business	2	104	21	20	9
<i>Durham</i>	<i>Geography</i>	<i>5*</i>	<i>168</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
Exeter	Geography	4	74	2	3	2
Gloucestershire	Sports Related	3b	44	4	9	3
Greenwich	Geography	3b	55	1	2	1
<i>Huddersfield</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>3b</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>
Lancaster	Sociology	5a	114	1	1	1
Leeds Metropolitan	Sports Related	3a	83	12	15	5
Lincoln	Business	3b	88	0	0	0
Manchester Metropolitan	Business	3b	105	0	0	0
<i>Newcastle</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>3a</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>1</i>

<i>Northumbria</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>3b</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Nottingham</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Nottingham Trent</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>3b</i>	<i>150</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>
Oxford Brookes	Town Planning	4	112	12	11	4
Plymouth	Social Policy	4	30	1	3	1
<i>Reading</i>	<i>Geography</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Salford</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>3a</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>2</i>
Sheffield Hallam ( <i>with Sheffield</i> )	Sports Related	4	79	17	22	7
<i>Staffordshire</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>3b</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>2</i>
Sunderland	Sports Related	3b	15	12	80	4
Surrey	Business	4	112	36	32	14
West of England	Geography	2	32	8	33	3
Westminster	Town Planning	3a	73	3	4	2
Wolverhampton	Business	3b	41	11	2	1
<b>Included within UoAs - Scotland</b>						
Glasgow Caledonian	Business	3a	162	15	9	7
Napier	Business	3b	42	3	7	2
Queen Margaret	Business	2	56	9	16	5
Robert Gordon	Business	2	10	0	0	0
<i>Stirling</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>142</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>2</i>
Strathclyde	Business	4	306	24	8	10
<b>Included within UoAs – Wales</b>						
<i>Glamorgan</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>3b</i>	<i>108</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Swansea Institute of HE</i>	<i>Town Planning</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>2</i>
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff	Sports Related	3a	38	9	24	3
			<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>3562</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Number of ATHE Member Institutions submitting:</b>			<b>27</b>			
<b>Number of Non-ATHE Member Institutions submitting:</b>			<b>16</b>			

*Italics = Non-ATHE members*

## Discussion

This study finds a substantial volume of ‘invisible’ tourism studies research output returned to the RAE 2001 (354 outputs by 146 staff across 7 UoAs). Many of these outputs were assessed by the 7 subject panels to be research of national excellence (11 submissions at grade 4 and 10 submissions at grade 3a representing 74 percent of outputs and 67 percent of staff). Caution is advised, however, in interpreting these data on several grounds. First, the study is only a partial interrogation of HEI submissions to the RAE2001 as it does not include searches of the ‘Income/studentship resources’ or ‘RA5a/RA6a/RA6d’ sections of the HERO web site. Second, these volume data are only indicative of research output in tourism studies during the RAE2001 census period because they do not:

- include tourism studies research output not included in the 4 outputs named in the RA2 submission, and
- by definition, does not include research output of staff **not** selected by an HEI for inclusion in a submission.

This latter point may explain the absence of some HEIs from the results table e.g. Manchester Metropolitan University and some research-active staff from submissions. Third, the conservative definition of tourism studies prescribed by the key word selection and described in the protocol might be underestimating tourism studies research output reported in the RAE2001 submissions. Fourth and finally, care should be taken in interpreting the health of tourism studies research from these data. The lack of visibility of tourism studies in the RAE 2001 is in itself an indication of the perceived low status of the subject within the political economy of UK higher education as opposed to tourism’s status as a key driver of the UK economy. It could be argued that given the volume and quality of work submitted in RAE2001 then tourism studies merits a more visible place in the structure and processes of any subsequent RAE. It is also important to comment here on the link between UK government funding for research and the RAE. The RAE is used by the four UK funding councils to allocate QR (Quality Research) funding to HEIs. In the earlier rounds of the RAE (1986 on), QR distributions to universities have largely followed a similar pattern in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. After RAE2001 that pattern changed with different quality grading thresholds set in each of the four funding councils. Given the preponderance of grades 4, 3a

and 3b in UoAs hosting tourism studies any change to the funding allocation in these mid-grades does appear to have a major impact upon the future prospects of research in the subject area across the UK. The subsequent revision by the HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) of the allocation of QR moneys in 2003/4 further complicates the picture. In a reallocation of QR money in England to the higher graded submissions, money previously allocated to departments rated 4 has been greatly reduced and money allocated to 3a departments in 2002/3 has not been allocated. The exception is for submissions rated 3a and 3b in what are described as seven emerging areas, including UoA 69 Sports Related Studies, a policy measure that effects 6 submissions by English HEIs that incorporated tourism studies output (see Table 1) ironically reinstating funding not awarded in 2002/3. Funding allocations for 2003/4 in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have yet to be announced (at the time of writing) but it is likely that some disparity on the formulae for allocating QR moneys using RAE2001 grading will persist between the funding councils. The implications of the changes to allocations are therefore difficult to estimate but with approximately 75 percent of all submissions with a tourism studies component coming from English HEIs there is likely to be a net loss in UK government funding for research in tourism studies. The growth of UK university research in tourism studies up to 2001 has been impressive despite the hostile environment created for it and other emerging interdisciplinary subjects by the funding mechanisms. The RAE is presently subject to consultation on its reform. Widely speculated to be next implemented in 2008/9, a subsequent RAE, plus the continued revision of funding council distribution of QR research funding, and the introduction of so called 'third stream funding' may produce a very different pattern of research in tourism studies by the end of the decade.

## **References**

Botterill, T.D., Gale, T. and Haven C. ( In press) A survey of doctoral theses accepted by universities in the UK and Ireland for studies of tourism, 1990-99, *Tourist Studies*.

Botterill, D. (2002) Tourism studies and research quality assessment, *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 1, 2, 71-74 (online journal <http://www.hlst.ltsn.ac.uk>).

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