



SUBMISSION

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND
STANDARD RESEARCH CLASSIFICATION
REVIEW
14 JUNE 2019

On 14 June 2019, The Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) provided a submission to the Australia and New Zealand Standard Research Classification Review.

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AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED ACADEMIES

ACOLA is the forum whereby Australia's Learned Academies and our Associate members come together to contribute expert advice to inform national policy; and to develop innovative solutions to complex global problems and emerging national needs.

14 June 2019

Dr Sue Thomas (Chair)
Chief Executive Officer
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By email: ARC-ANZSRCReview@arc.gov.au

Dear Dr Thomas

Re: Australia and New Zealand Standard Research Classification Review 2019

The Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the ANZSRC review.

ACOLA provides the platform for collaboration between Australia's four Learned Academies – Australian Academy of the Humanities, Australian Academy of Science, Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering. Through the Learned Academies and with the leading expertise of their fellowships, ACOLA brings more than 2,000 of the nation's most eminent scientists, researchers, scholars and practitioners together to contribute to its rich source of expert knowledge and to inform national policy about complex multidimensional problems and emerging national needs.

ACOLA acknowledges the important role of the ANZSRC in ensuring that research and development in Australia and New Zealand is appropriately classified and evaluated. ACOLA welcomes the review to ensure that the classification codes remain relevant and fit for purpose in a changing research environment.

As developments in science and technology progress rapidly, it is important to draw on deep expertise across the arts, engineering, humanities, natural sciences, social sciences and technology to analyse the future, navigate change and highlight opportunities for the nation. Interdisciplinary research provides the forum for ensuring that these issues are assessed in a holistic manner to ensure that we maximise benefits to society while also minimising risks.

The classification of interdisciplinary research, however, has long proved problematic. Research that involves more than one discipline may cut across multiple classifications and therefore does not necessarily have one discernible classification within the current structures. This conflicts with one of the fundamental principles of any classification system – mutual exclusivity – where each unit of research should fit into one category of classification, and where categories should not overlap.

The current approach in the ANZSRC reflects this issue and is noted in the discussion paper – interdisciplinary research is allocated to the most appropriate Field of Research (FoR) or assigned across fields. Researchers are limited to classifying their research to



either the broadest or most appropriate field. The identification of relevant research across disciplines is a necessary and critical aspect of interdisciplinary research. However, different terminology and classification codes across disciplines can present a potential risk that relevant research may not be readily discoverable.

In 2012, the Australian Research Council commissioned ACOLA to conduct a multivalent program of research into the question of interdisciplinary research in the area of sustainability. Phase one of this program, *Strengthening Interdisciplinary Research: What it is, what it does, how it does it and how it is supported*, identified ways of classifying interdisciplinary research. The report is enclosed in this submission for reference. The report provides six recommendations on supporting interdisciplinary research, including the importance of establishing a parsimonious classification system to allow the status of interdisciplinary research to be properly assessed (Recommendation 1).

The report recognises that such a system moves away from all-encompassing definitions and adds a level of complexity to the distinctions between multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. It further suggests that any development on a classification system must assess the considerations raised in the scholarship on interdisciplinary research theory alongside insights from interdisciplinary research in practice.

While the implementation of these recommendations are outside of the scope of the ANZSRC review, they may provide a useful framework to support the classification of interdisciplinary research.

Noting that this issue of classifying interdisciplinary research impacts on the wider research community, ACOLA would welcome the opportunity to expand on these points and provide further comment throughout the ANZSRC review. The contact at ACOLA is Stephanie Chan, Senior Policy and Research Analyst and can be reached at (03) 9864 0937 or at stephanie@acola.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Lauren Palmer
Chief Executive Officer (Interim)
Australian Council of Learned Academies

