AN ANALYSIS OF BRITISH MUSIC RESEARCH
as reflected in REF2014 and RAE2008

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April 2016

Foreword

One of the better antique maxims, reportedly found in the forecourt to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, is 'Know Thyself'. It has been read in so many ways: Aristophanes offers 'Know yourself, how ignorant and stupid you are' while it figures on a *memento mori* mosaic from the convent of San Gregorio in Rome (below), and it is found in authors from Hobbes to Hofmannsthal. For a scholarly community which develops as quickly and ambitiously as the one that the Royal Musical Association represents, knowing yourself is important, not only to keep up with changes in the anatomy of the discipline but also to be able to speak authoritatively to those who would like to know more about the study of music.

The 2014 Research Excellence Framework, and its 2008 predecessor, the Research Assessment Exercise, provided data that allow us genuinely to 'know ourselves'. Getting a sense of the proportions of the discipline this way moves us away from anecdote, which risks moving so easily from polemic to policy, and towards a hard-edged, no-nonsense, look at what we do. Clearly there are limitations as we try and make the results from the exercise a proxy for the architecture of the discipline: the 2014 REF only reflects the work of those employed by universities – and not perhaps its most innovative scholars: its graduate students (a similar analysis of PhD submission has already been undertaken and requires nothing more than update), but in general the analysis undertaken here serves well as a proxy for the state of the discipline both in late 2013 and in late 2007. I am grateful to Professor Simon McVeigh and Dr Richard Lewis (Goldsmiths, University of London), assisted in the later stages by Professors Michael Clarke (University of Huddersfield) and Thomas Schmidt (University of Manchester), for sustained and painstaking work in assembling the data and its commentary, and to the RMA's Michael Byde for turning it into a useable set of web pages and downloadable pdf.

Mark Everist
President, The Royal Musical Association

The Project and Headline Conclusions

The Research Excellence Framework (REF), a national assessment exercise carried out in 2014, provides a unique snapshot of music research across British universities and conservatoires. In 2015 the RMA commissioned an analysis of the submissions and a comparison with the similar Research Assessment Exercise in 2008. The analysis reveals for the first time the rich diversity of British music research, as well as some shifting directions:

- **56** institutions submitted music research to specialist sub-panel 35 (**2399** items, slightly down from *2539*) [Table 1]

- Composition and related creative practice amounted to **32**%, performance **8%**, text-based publications **60%** (in 2008, *31%*, *12%*, *57%*)

- Within composition, score-based outputs maintained a slim majority (**55%**, *65%*) but there has been an increase in technology-based practice with or without acoustic instruments (**31%**, *27%*), and especially in multimedia projects and installations (**11%**, *3%*) [Table 4]

- Within publications, those in historical and related theoretical studies are also still in the majority (**60%**, *69%*), yet most other sub-disciplines (including ethnomusicology, popular music studies, computer studies, psychology) have shown modest increases, eclipsed by the rise of film music studies from *2%* to **5%** [Table 2]

- Within those areas that can be readily dated (primarily historical studies and performance), no significant changes in distribution can be identified:

to c1600	**12%**, *11%*
17c-18c	**24%**, *24%*
19c	**20%**, *21%*
c1900-1945	**18%**, *17%*
post 1945	**26%**, *27%*

  although the total sample was 17% down in terms of absolute numbers [Table 5]

- A surprising **631** relevant items were submitted to a wide range of other sub-panels [Table 7], producing striking percentage rises in music computing, psychology and health, in popular music studies and cultural industries, in education and philosophy, as well as installations and multimedia projects [Tables 2 and 4]; 51% of these items were journal articles, double the proportion in the main sample [Table 6]

- A new element of REF 2014 was Impact outside academia, and again the analysis reveals a remarkable range, with Case Studies spanning almost every area of text-based and practice research, as well as all time periods [Tables 2-5]

Research Excellence Framework (REF)

In 1986 research across British universities and specialist colleges was centrally assessed for the first time and government funding was allocated according to the outcome. Similar exercises have taken place every few years, culminating in the Research Excellence Framework 2014 (www.ref.ac.uk). Research was assessed under three headings:

- Outputs (up to four publications or other forms of research output per researcher)
- Impact (outside academia, including two or more case studies)
- Environment (a statement of research strategy and other measures)

The high level of achievement in Music across the three categories can be seen from the results themselves. The following table gives the overall percentages achieved across the whole of Unit of Assessment 35 – Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts:

	4*	3*	2*	1*	unclassified
Overall quality	**29**	**39**	**24**	**6**	**2**
Outputs	25.0	37.1	27.7	8.5	1.7
Impact	38.8	41.3	16.4	1.7	1.8
Environment	36.4	40.3	19.7	3.5	0.1

where starred levels reflect quality (in terms of originality, significance and rigour) as follows:

4* world-leading; 3* internationally excellent; 2* recognised internationaly; 1* recognised nationally

Table 1. Overview of Outputs and Impact Case Studies

	REF2014 Outputs (Music UoA35)		REF2014 Outputs (Other UoAs)		REF2014 Outputs (All)		RAE2008 Outputs (UoA67)		REF2014 Impact Case Studies (Music UoA35)
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
Text-based, including online resources, software and artefacts	1441	60.1	556	88.1	1997	65.9	1441	56.8	
Performance and related creative practice	194	8.1	10	1.6	204	6.7	301	11.9	
Composition and related creative practice	764	31.8	65	10.3	829	27.4	797	31.4	
TOTAL	2399		631		3030		2539		104

Table 2. Text-based outputs including online resources, software and artefacts

Classification	REF2014 Outputs (Music UoA35)		REF2014 Outputs (Other UoAs)		REF2014 Outputs (All)		RAE2008 Outputs (UoA67)		REF2014 Impact Case Studies (Music UoA35)
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency
Historical studies *	676	42.9	98	17.6	774	36.3	805	51.5	43
Ethnomusicology, world music	206	13.2	33	5.9	239	11.2	175	11.2	16
Popular music studies	122	7.7	89	16.0	211	9.9	96	6.2	8
Computer music studies, music technology, recording	105	6.6	56	10.1	161	7.6	63	4.0	14
Performance studies *	83	5.3	17	3.1	100	4.7	82	5.3	9
Psychology, neuroscience	76	4.8	65	11.7	141	6.6	57	3.6	3
Film music studies, TV, games	76	4.8	31	5.6	107	5.0	35	2.2	2
Education	55	3.5	44	7.9	99	4.6	71	4.5	11
Music theory and analysis *	52	3.3	3	0.5	55	2.6	59	3.8	0
Aesthetics, philosophy, criticism *	34	2.2	38	6.8	72	3.4	19	1.2	0
Other scientific	28	1.8	4	0.7	32	1.5	24	1.5	3
Music therapy, health, wellbeing	26	1.6	27	4.9	53	2.5	23	1.5	8
Instruments, voice *	24	1.5	10	1.8	34	1.6	35	2.2	5
Cultural industries	12	0.8	41	7.4	53	2.5	19	1.2	4

* These categories are included in the dating table below

Table 3. Performance and related creative practice

Classification	REF2014 Outputs (Music UoA35)		REF2014 Outputs (Other UoAs)		REF2014 Outputs (All)		RAE2008 Outputs (UoA67)		REF2014 Impact Case Studies (Music UoA35)
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency
Performance of notated scores *	182	93.8	0	0.0	182	89.2	267	88.7	16
Improvisation and other non-notated practice	12	6.2	9	90.0	21	10.3	15	5.0	2
Recording projects	0	0.0	1	10.0	1	0.5	19	6.4	0

Table 4. Composition and related creative practice

Classification	REF2014 Outputs (Music UoA35)		REF2014 Outputs (Other UoAs)		REF2014 Outputs (All)		RAE2008 Outputs (UoA67)		REF2014 Impact Case Studies (Music UoA35)
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency
Score-based composition (chamber/solo)	242	31.7	0	0.0	242	29.2	302	37.9	5
Technology-based composition with acoustic instruments	146	19.1	0	0.0	146	17.6	123	15.4	3
Score-based composition (large ensembles)	121	15.8	0	0.0	121	14.6	169	21.2	17
Technology-based composition	94	12.3	7	10.8	101	12.2	92	11.5	7
Installation, multimedia	83	10.8	43	66.2	126	15.2	27	3.3	10
Score-based opera / music theatre	58	7.6	6	9.2	64	7.7	45	5.7	8
Film music / broadcast media / games	20	2.6	9	13.8	29	3.5	39	4.9	2

Table 5. Dating

	REF2014 Outputs (Music UoA35)		REF2014 Outputs (Other UoAs)		REF2014 Outputs (All)		RAE2008 Outputs (UoA67)		REF2014 Impact Case Studies (Music UoA35)
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency
Text-based (asterisked categories only)									
To c1400	48	5.1	15	7.5	63	5.4	51	4.8	6
15–16c	73	7.5	11	5.5	84	7.3	84	7.5	7
17c	74	7.6	7	3.5	81	7.0	85	7.6	3
18c	143	14.2	14	7.0	157	13.6	160	13.8	7
19c	210	20.7	23	11.6	233	20.2	257	21.9	11
c1900–c1945	173	17.1	25	12.5	198	17.1	192	16.5	9
c1945–c2000	138	13.7	27	13.6	165	14.3	178	15.4	8
c2000–	59	6.2	29	14.6	88	7.6	37	3.5	1
no clear period	58	6.1	29	14.6	87	7.5	93	8.2	5
Performance of notated scores									
To c1400	3	1.4					3	1.0	1
15–16c	14	6.5					11	3.5	3
17c	23	10.6					31	9.6	3
18c	33	15.2					46	14.2	3
19c	16	7.4					35	10.8	3
c1900–c1945	28	12.9					46	14.2	2
c1945–c2000	42	19.4					69	21.2	1
c2000–	54	24.9					79	24.3	1
no clear period	2	0.9					3	1.0	0

Table 6. Output types
As selected by the submitting HEI: they do not match the figures above, as sometimes a composition may be designated 'performance' or 'digital media' etc.

Type		REF2014 Outputs (Music UoA35)		REF2014 Outputs (Other UoAs)		REF2014 Outputs (All)		RAE2008 Outputs (UoA67)	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
J	Composition	637	26.5	8	1.3	645	21.3	649	25.6
D	Journal article	612	25.5	323	51.2	935	30.9	560	22.1
C	Chapter in book	460	19.2	102	16.6	562	18.5	441	17.4
A	Authored book	198	8.2	84	13.3	282	9.3	202	8.0
Q	Digital or visual media	134	5.6	13	2.1	147	4.9	195	7.7
I	Performance	105	4.4	15	2.4	120	4.0	150	5.9
B	Edited book	78	3.2	19	3.0	97	3.2	50	2.0
R	Scholarly edition	51	2.1	2	0.3	53	1.7	68	2.7
T	Other form of assessable output	38	1.6	4	0.6	42	1.4	70	2.8
E	Conference contribution	23	1.0	15	2.4	38	1.3	55	2.2
M	Exhibition	21	0.9	26	4.1	47	1.6	8	0.3
L	Artefact	18	0.7	16	2.5	34	1.1	25	1.0
H	Website content	8	0.3	1	0.2	9	0.3	50	2.0
G	Software	4	0.2	0	0.0	4	0.1	5	0.2
U	Working paper	4	0.2	1	0.2	5	0.2	0	0.0
S	Research datasets and databases	3	0.1	0	0.0	3	0.1	3	0.1
F	Patent/published patent application	2	0.1	0	0.0	2	0.1	0	0.0
P	Devices and products	1	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	1	0.0
N	Research report for external body	1	0.0	2	0.3	3	0.1	7	0.3
K	Design	1	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0

Table 7. Outputs submitted to other REF2014 UoAs with 'music' and related terms in the title

Panel	Sub-panel		Outputs	Panel totals
A	3	Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy	9	
A	4	Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	29	
A	5	Biological Sciences	2	40
B	11	Computer Science and Informatics	52	
B	13	Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Metallurgy and Materials	14	
B	15	General Engineering	6	72
C	16	Architecture, Built Environment and Planning	4	
C	17	Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology	5	
C	19	Business and Management Studies	14	
C	21	Politics and International Studies	4	
C	22	Social Work and Social Policy	7	
C	23	Sociology	18	
C	24	Anthropology and Development Studies	13	
C	25	Education	57	
C	26	Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism	11	133
D	27	Area Studies	3	
D	28	Modern Languages and Linguistics	50	
D	29	English Language and Literature	40	
D	30	History	17	
D	31	Classics	6	
D	32	Philosophy	8	
D	33	Theology and Religious Studies	4	
D	34	Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory	122	
D	35	Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts [non-Music items]	41	
D	36	Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management	95	386
TOTAL			631	631

This table was compiled from an initial search of output titles containing any of the following terms: Acoustic; Instrument(al); Melod(y/ic); Music(al); Opera; Pitch; Play(er/s, ing); Sing(-er/s, ing); Song; Sound; Timbr(e/al). The resulting items were then filtered as to whether they could reasonably have been entered as Music items to UoA 35.

Methodology and Selection Procedures

For 2014 outputs and impact case studies, the analysis focussed on submissions to UoA 35 – Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts. Where a Music Department or conservatoire submitted separately, all items were analysed; otherwise a judgment was made as to which items to include. As a proxy to indicate the level of submission to other UoAs, Table 7 presents an analysis of titles containing 'music' and related terms. A similar process was applied to 2008 outputs (UoA 67 – Music).

Some caveats should be noted:

- In both these exercises, institutions were free to select which staff and outputs to enter, so the results do not reflect the sum total of research in the discipline.

- Because items could be offered as 'double-weighted' (plus a reserve) the data will not correspond exactly to the items actually assessed. In REF2014, around 4% of items were proposed for double-weighting.

Furthermore, precise categorisation can be problematical in individual cases and might actually misrepresent the cross-boundary nature of the research. There are clear overlaps between research in music psychology and in education, and between ethnomusicology and popular music studies; while hardly any area does not relate in some way to performance studies. Aesthetics and analysis are similarly pervasive; and even the distinction between text-based research and creative practice is not entirely clear-cut. To attempt to mitigate this effect, some multiple categorisations were admitted, meaning that absolute totals in the Tables will not necessarily match precisely.

Some categories have been allocated datings, by century rather than traditional 'musical periods'. Again, multiple datings were admitted.

The categorisation of composition and related creative practice was particularly challenging, and was the subject of extensive consultation. In order to avoid misleading or subjective interpretations of idiom or function, the categories adopted reflect musical forces and types of venue in as objective a way as possible.

Categorisation of Impact Case Studies in REF2014

Each submission included from two to four impact case studies (depending on the number of researchers submitted). The underpinning research was identified in the case study, forming the basis of the analysis presented here. Since many ICSs spanned a range of different kinds of research, they often fitted multiple categories, so no attempt has been made to allocate percentages. It should be stressed that this is not an analysis of the cited impact itself (which often extended much more widely into education, health, the creative industries, and so on); but only attempts to identify the research area from which the impact derived.

Sources

All data analysed is in the public domain:

REF2014 submissions: results.ref.ac.uk/DownloadSubmissions

REF2014 reports: www.ref.ac.uk/panels/paneloverviewreports/ (UoA 35 in Panel D pp. 92–109)

RAE2008 submissions: www.rae.ac.uk/submissions/

RAE2008 reports: www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2009/ov/ (UoA 67 in Panel O)

For Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts in REF2014, results by institution can be seen at: results.ref.ac.uk/Results/ByUoa/35

and in an interpretation of rank order at: www.timeshighereducation.com/sites/default/files/Attachments/2014/12/17/x/o/z/sub-14-01.pdf (pp. 37–9).

Acknowledgments