

The current state of education research and prospects for the future

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BERA Heads of Department Meeting

28th March 2012

Report of the BERA-UCET Working Group on
Education Research

**Prospects for Education Research in
Education Departments
in Higher Education Institutions in the UK**

January 2012

BERA-UCET Working Group

Donald Christie, Mark Donoghue, Gordon Kirk,
Olwen McNamara, Ian Menter, Gemma Moss,
James Noble-Rogers, Alis Oancea, Colin Rogers,
Pat Thomson, Geoff Whitty (chair)

Chronology

- In February 2011, UCET identified possible threats to education research in the UK
- UCET and BERA established a joint working group on the state of education research in HEIs and possible future scenarios
- Workshops were held at BERA conference and UCET Research Committee
- Report was presented to BERA and UCET in January 2012

Context of the review

- Coalition government's *Importance of Teaching* etc encouraging more school-led ITT in England
- Significant reductions in allocations of student numbers by the TDA for 2011/12 and beyond
- Increased fees with bursaries and income contingent loans for trainees on undergraduate and PGCE routes
- Cessation of most PGT funding for teachers' professional development apart from National Scholarship Scheme
- Core funding for research through QR and research students through ESRC DTCs becoming more concentrated
- Significant reduction in funding for education research projects from government departments and agencies
- Public expenditure cuts affecting major clients for CPD and enterprise activities
- Similar but also some contrary developments in the devolved administrations

Possible impacts on research

- Funding cuts threatening viability of some Education departments
- Reductions in overall staffing in Education
- Workload demands making it less possible for more junior staff to be research active
- Lower take up of higher degrees in Education affecting supply line for researchers
- Potential for a 'perfect storm' - or were we 'crying wolf'?

Issues for further investigation

- The likelihood of anticipated threats eventuating
- Whether education research is in long-term decline or merely experiencing a cyclical downturn
- Whether education research is contracting faster than other areas of social research
- The extent to which education research and teacher education can be considered as inextricably linked.

What is the current state of education research?

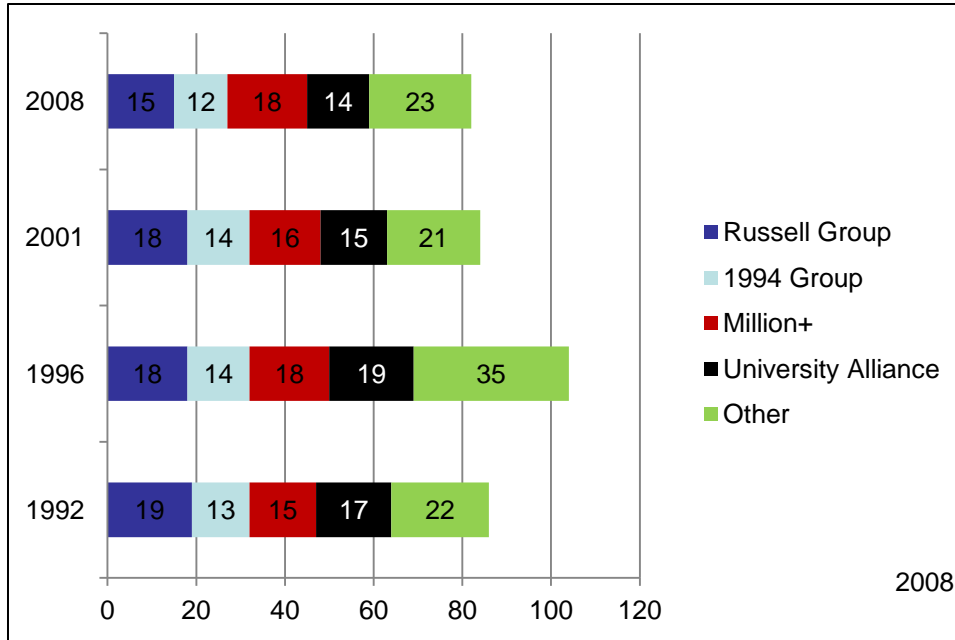
How has it evolved over the past two decades and relative to other social science disciplines?

On this background, what implications may recent policy decisions and proposals have for the future of education research?

1. Infrastructure for research
2. Capacity
3. Funding streams:
 - Research funding
 - Teacher education
 - Other postgraduate funding
4. Focus of research



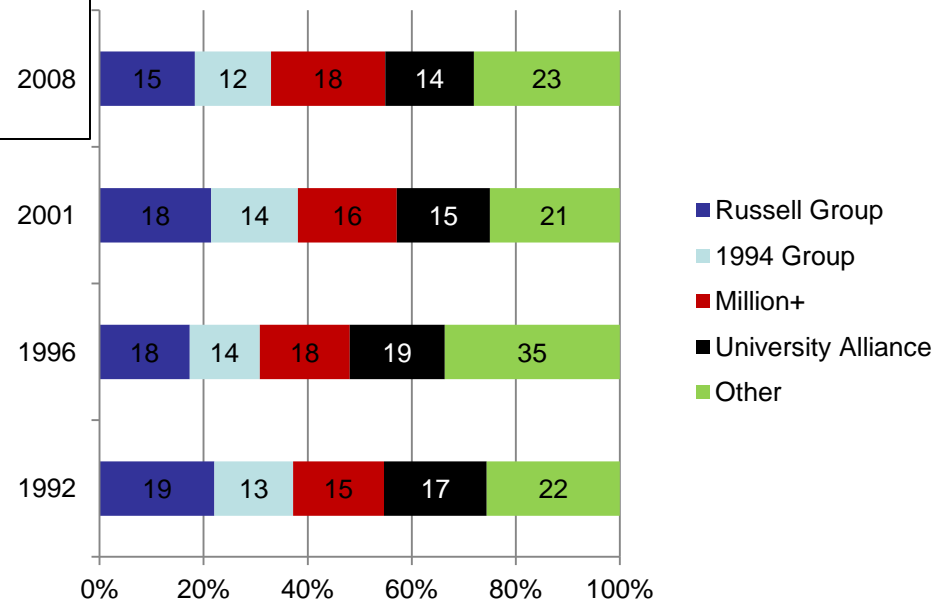
Institutional infrastructure



As absolute values

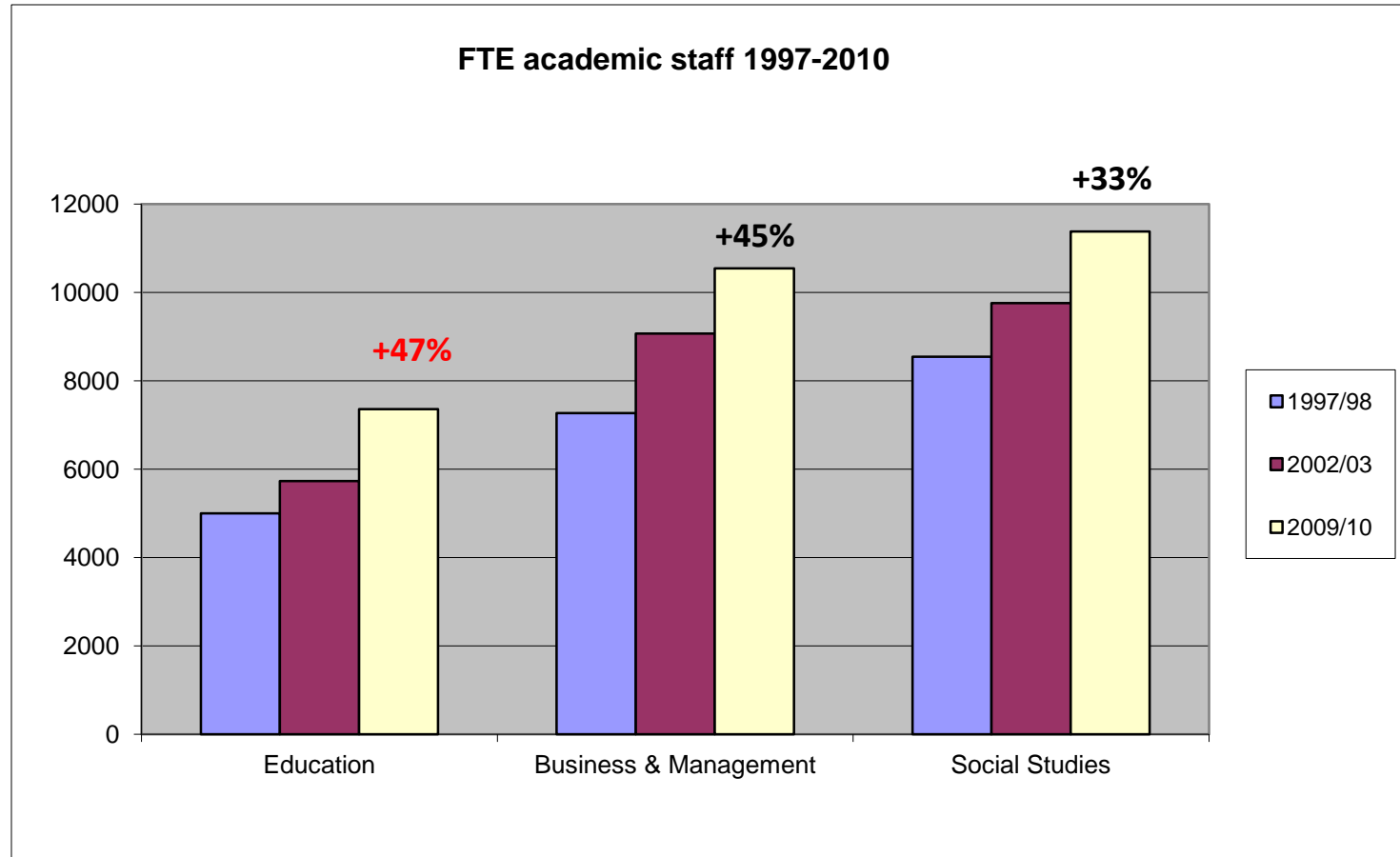
Number of institutions submitting to each RAE (total of the four countries) 1992-2008, by mission group (as affiliated in 2011)

HEIs: 86/104/84/82



As percentages

Size of the field



Submitted to RAE 2008 as proportion of total 2007/08 TR+R FTE on permanent and open contracts

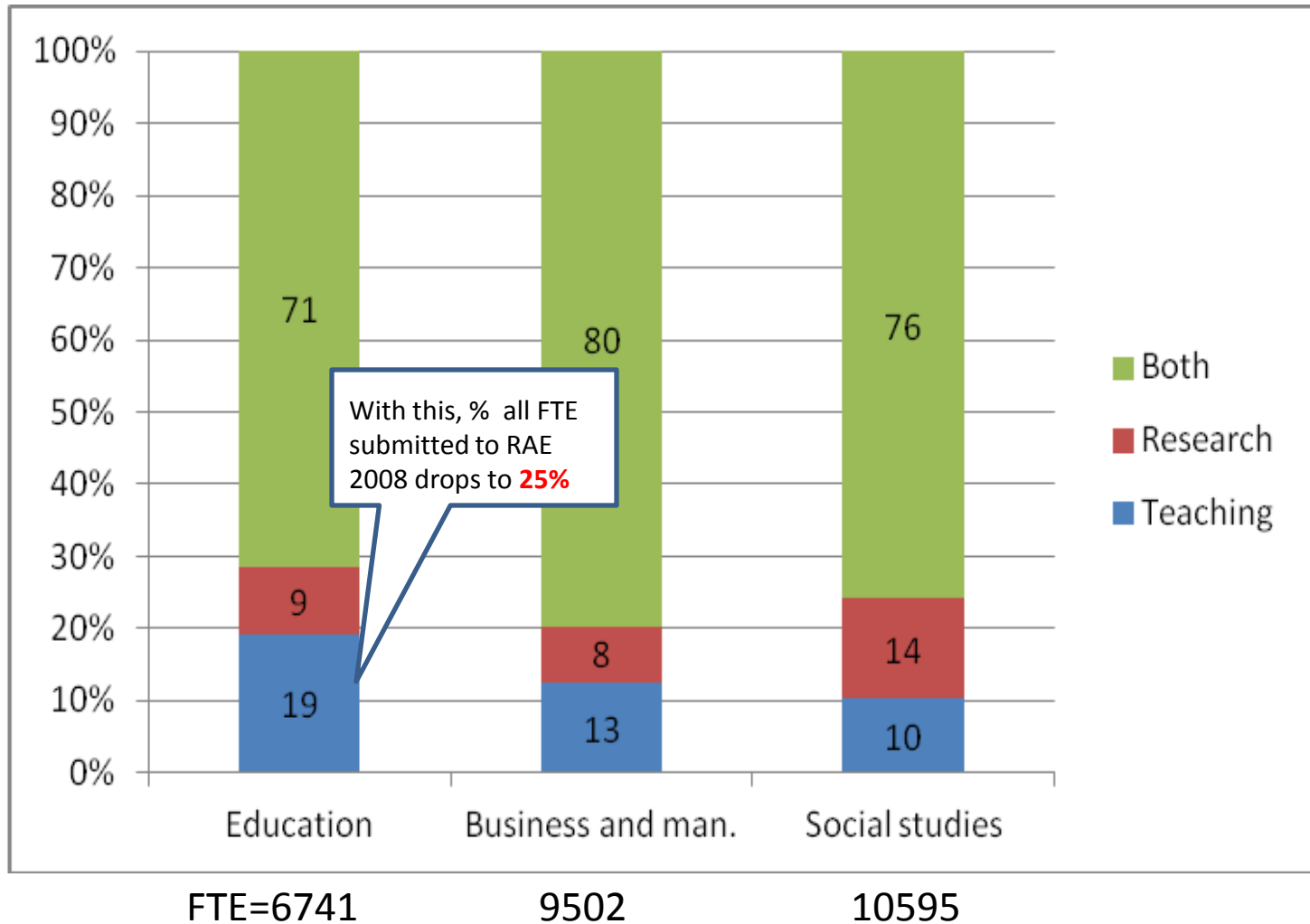
37%

40%

46%

Capacity

FTE staff by academic employment function, 2007/08 (HESA) (%)



Capacity

Total FTE research active staff submitted to the RAE, 1996-2008 (all countries)



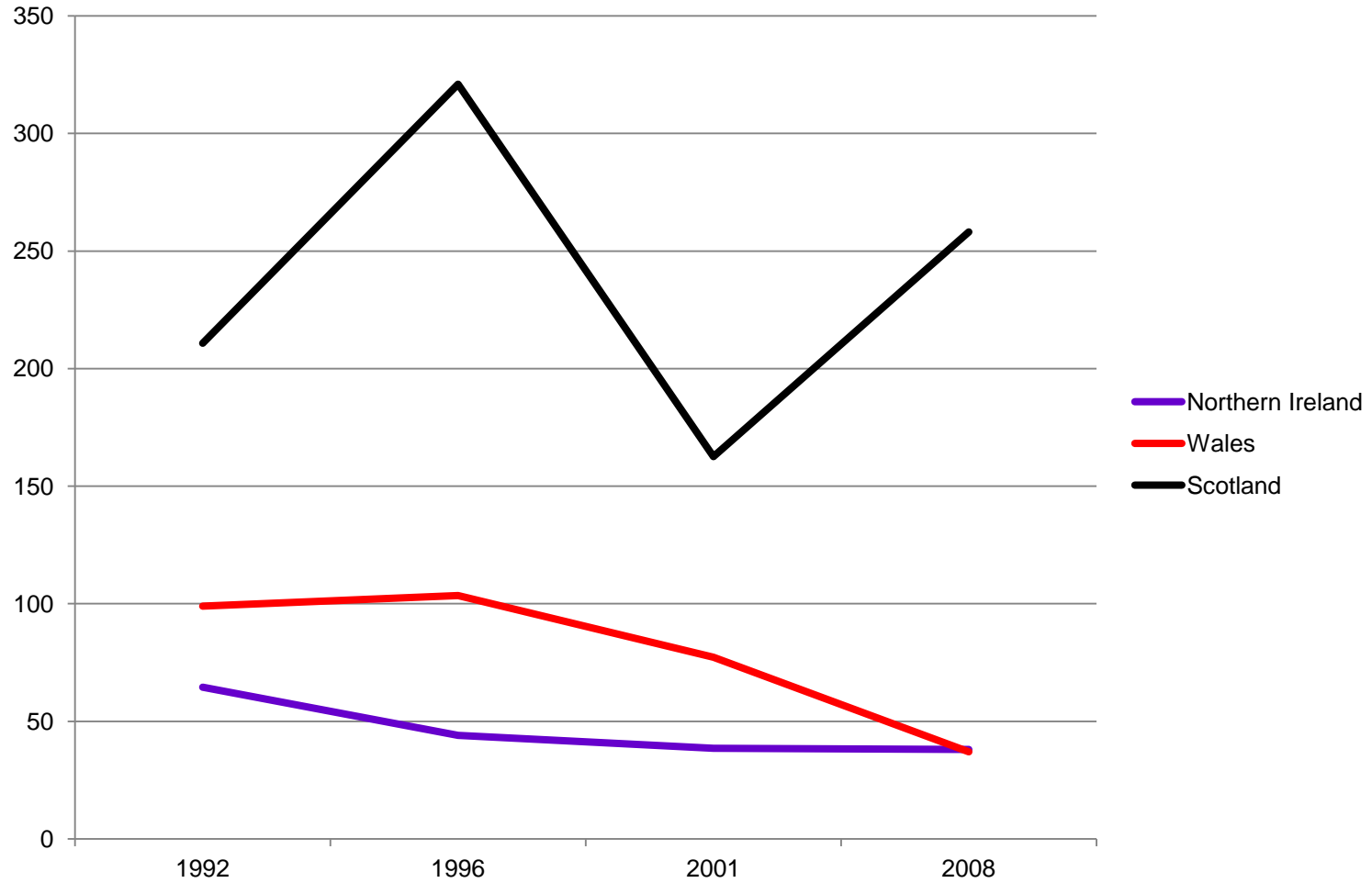
HEIs: 104/84/82

Percentage change total FTE research active staff submitted in RAE 2008 relative to value in RAE 1996

Psych	Built Env	Planning	Geogr	Law	Anthrop	Econ	Politics	Soc Work	Sociol	Business	Account	Education	Sports	Archaeol	Library
44	-13	-11	4	30	26	-6	26	25	4	44	-21	-39	122	39	41

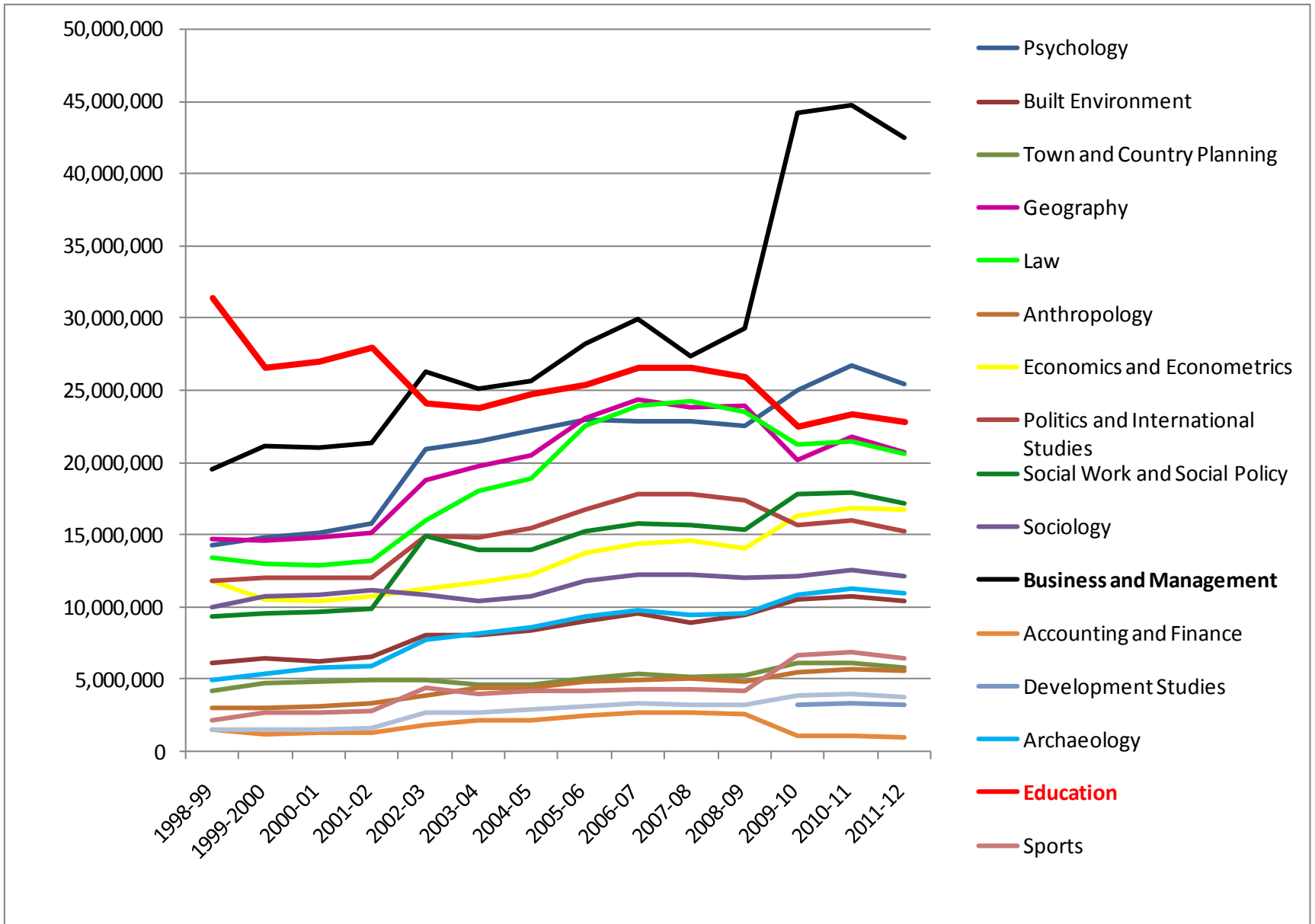
Capacity

FTE in NI, S and W, as submitted to RAE 1992-2008



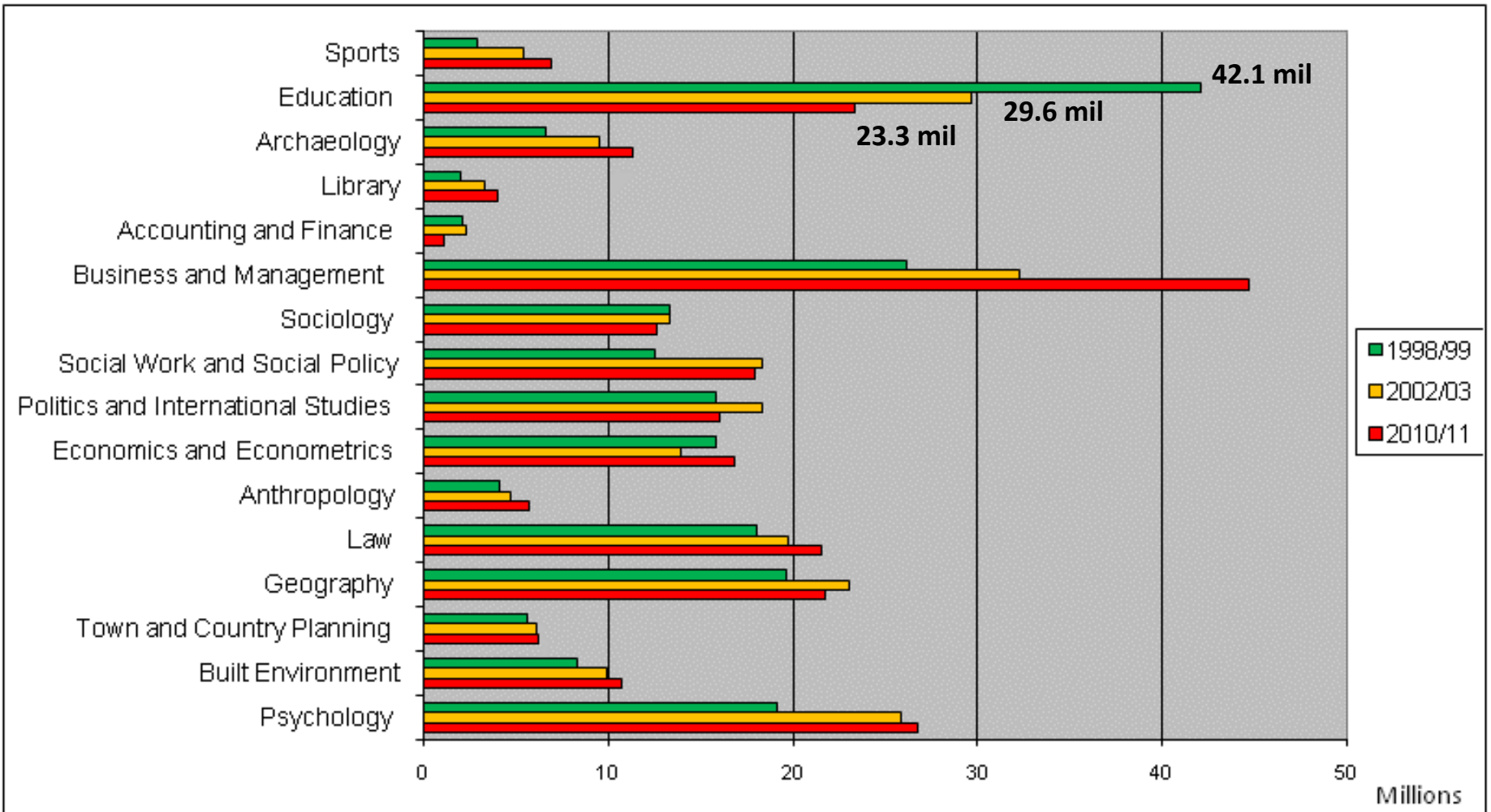
Funding

Total HEFCE QR allocations by social science discipline, 1998-2012 (absolute figures)



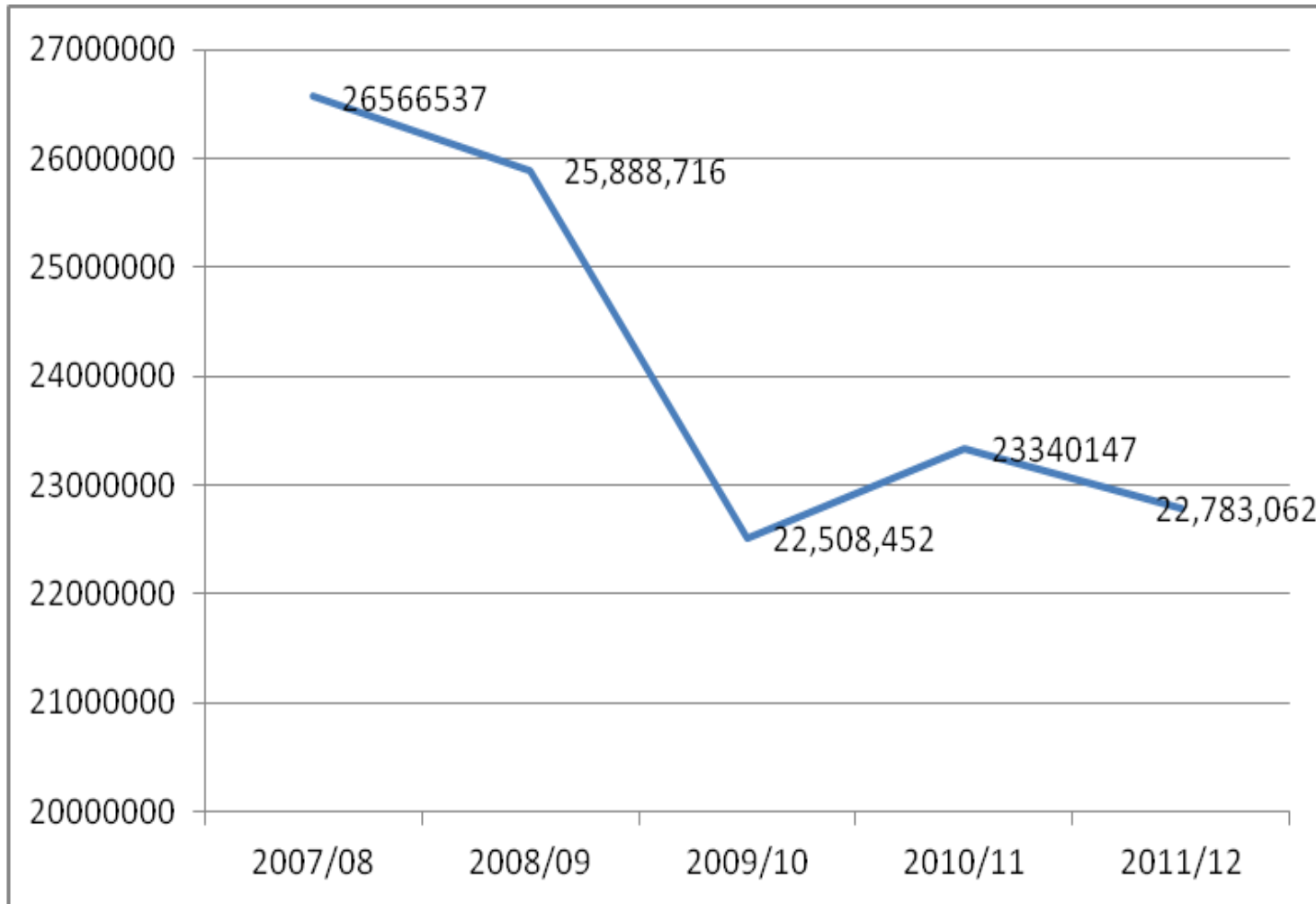
Funding

HEFCE QR allocations by social science discipline, 1998-2012 (real terms, 2010/11 as reference)

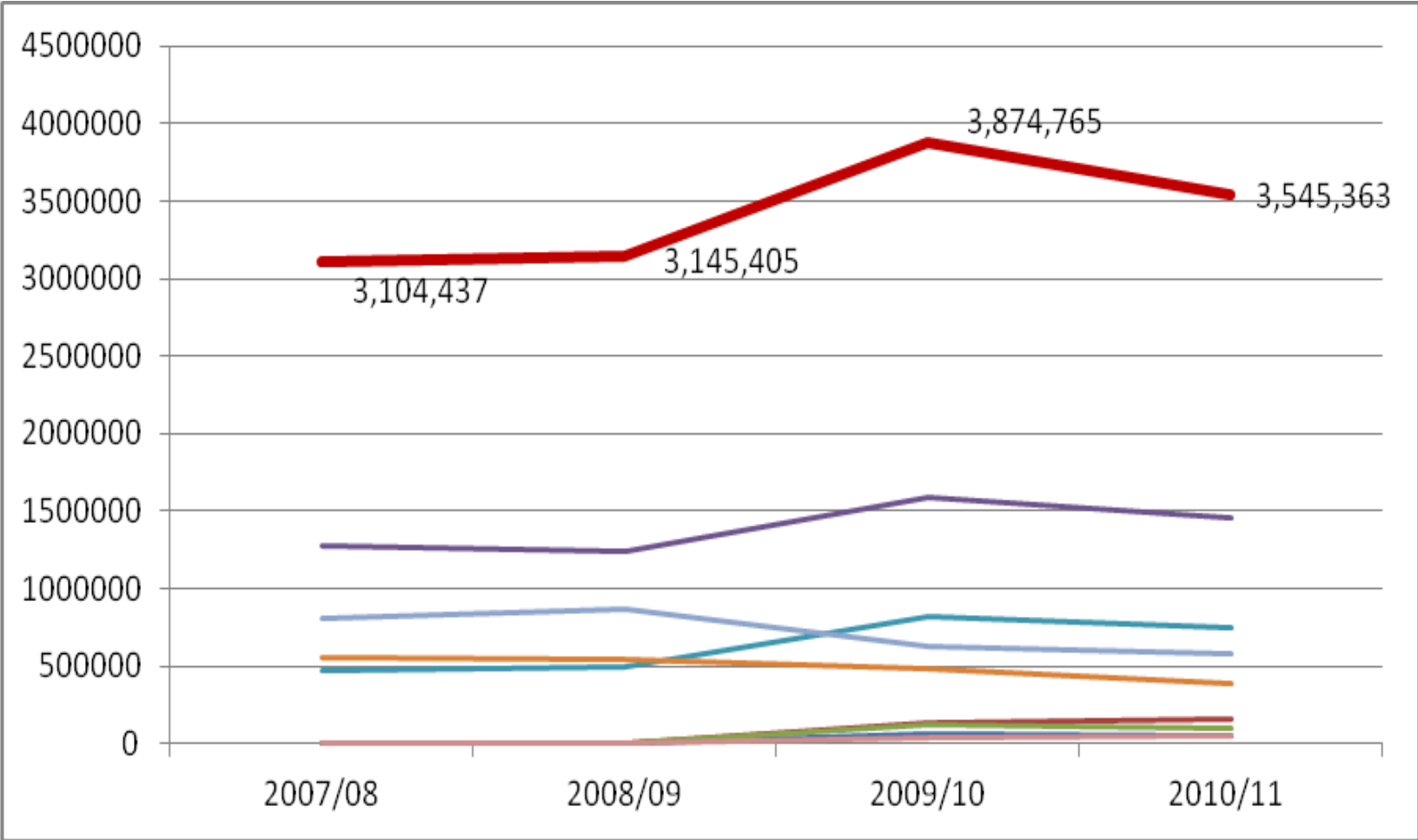


Funding - QR, 2007-12, England

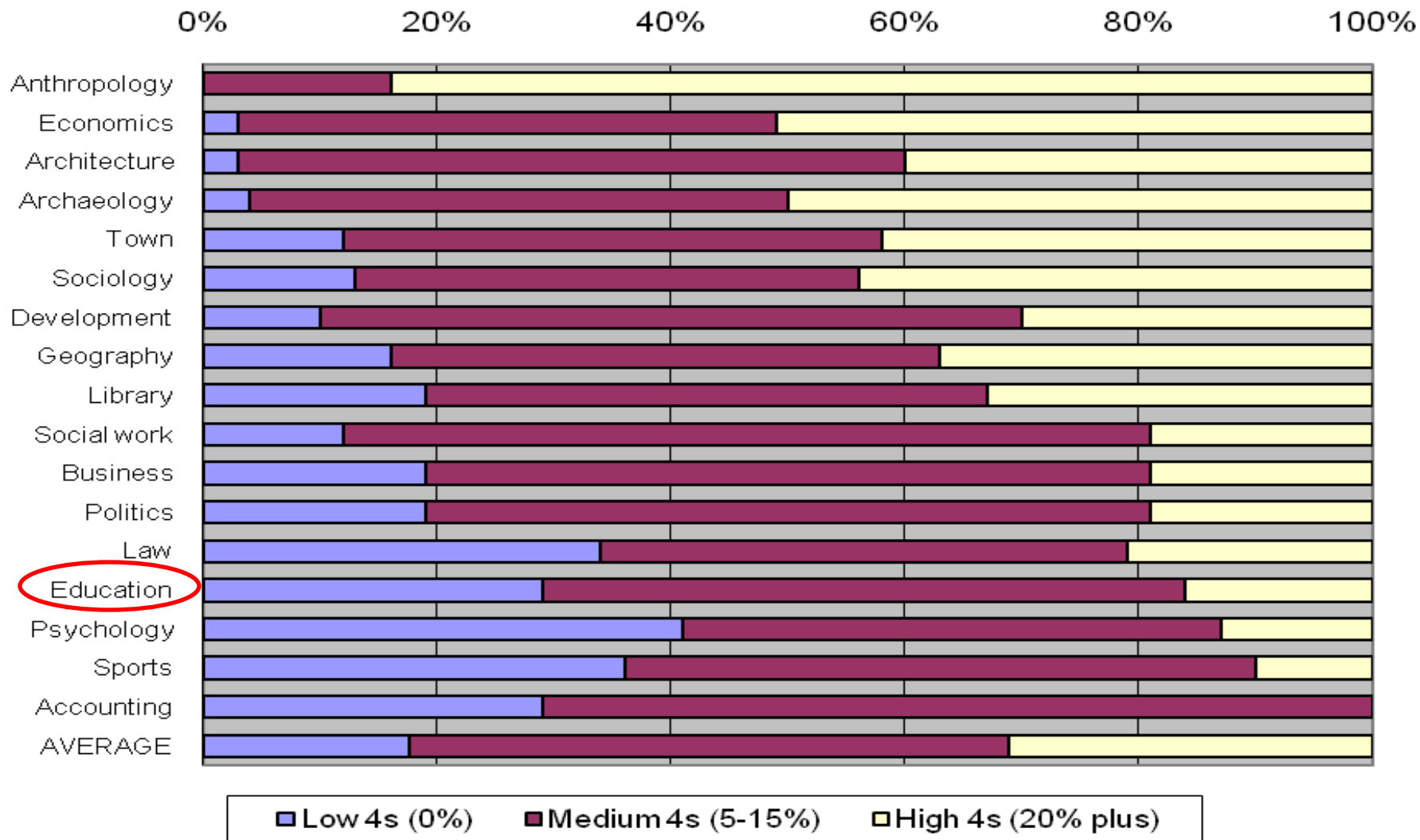
Mainstream QR allocation by HEFCE to the education UoA (absolute figures), 2007-2012



Funding: QR allocation, 2007-12, Scotland



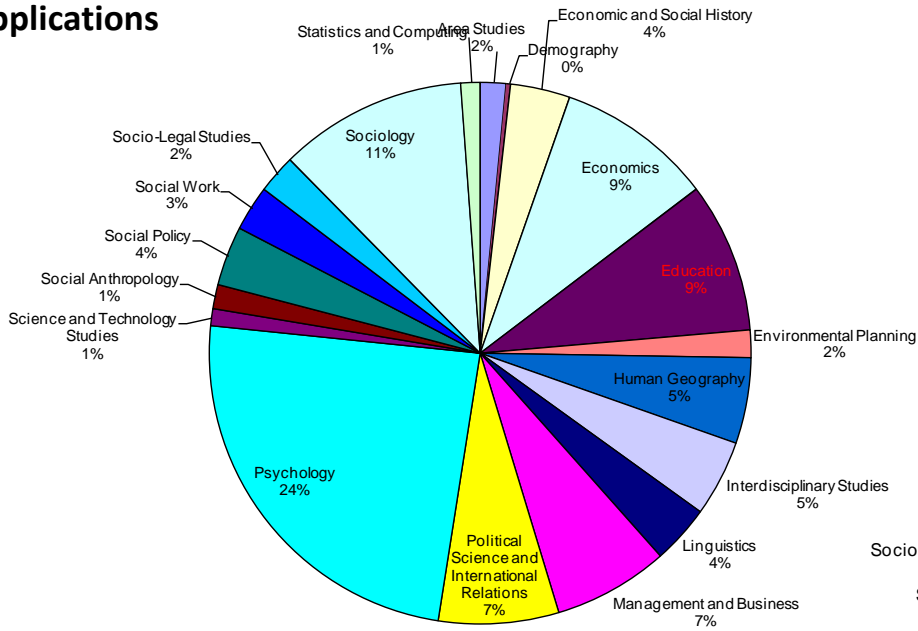
Quality assessment (4-ness)



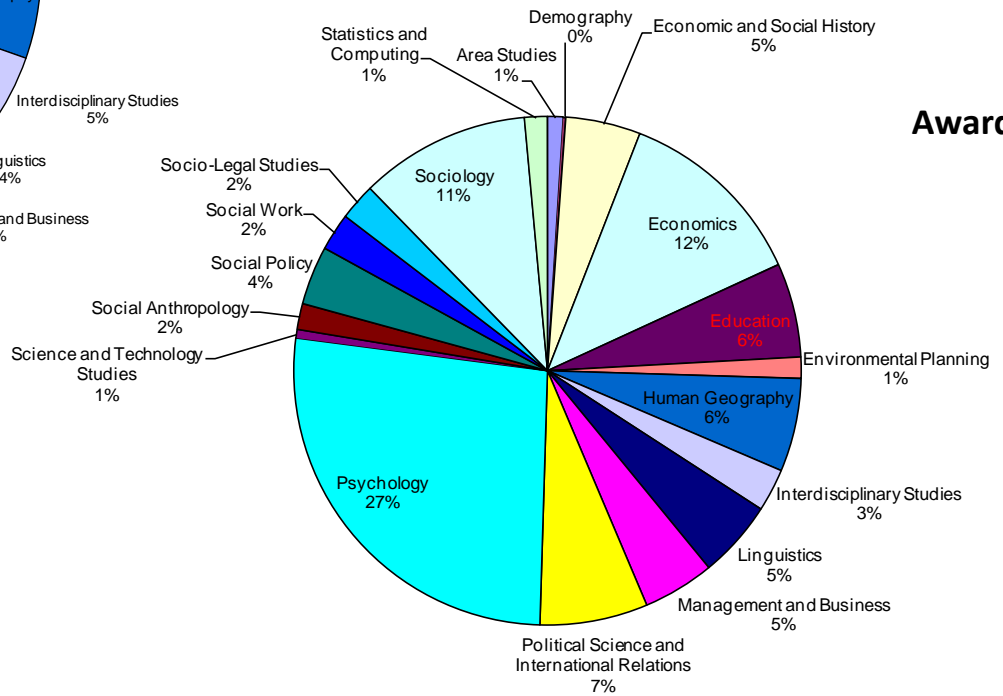
Funding

ESRC applications and awards (averages 2001-2011)

Applications

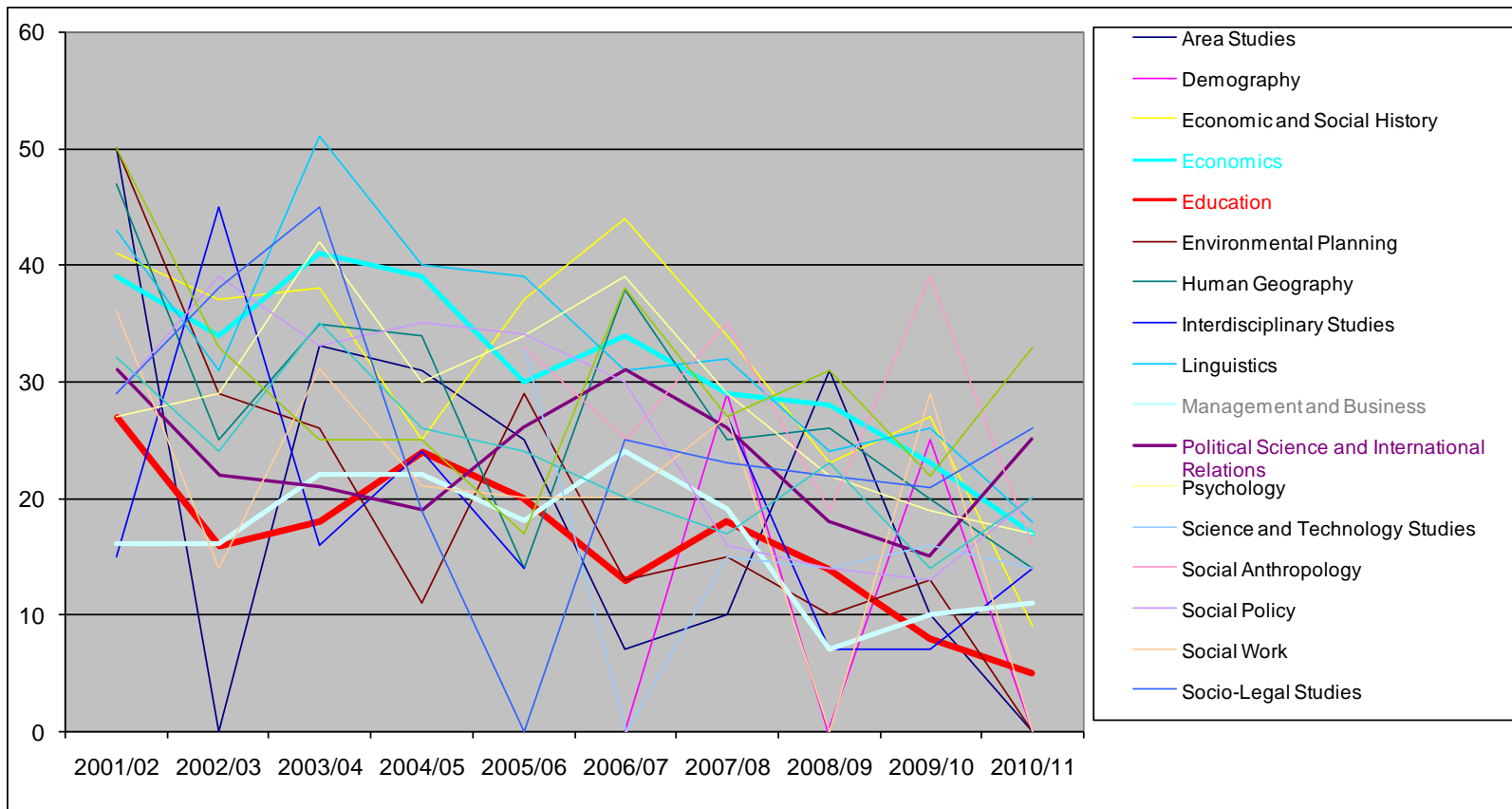


Awards



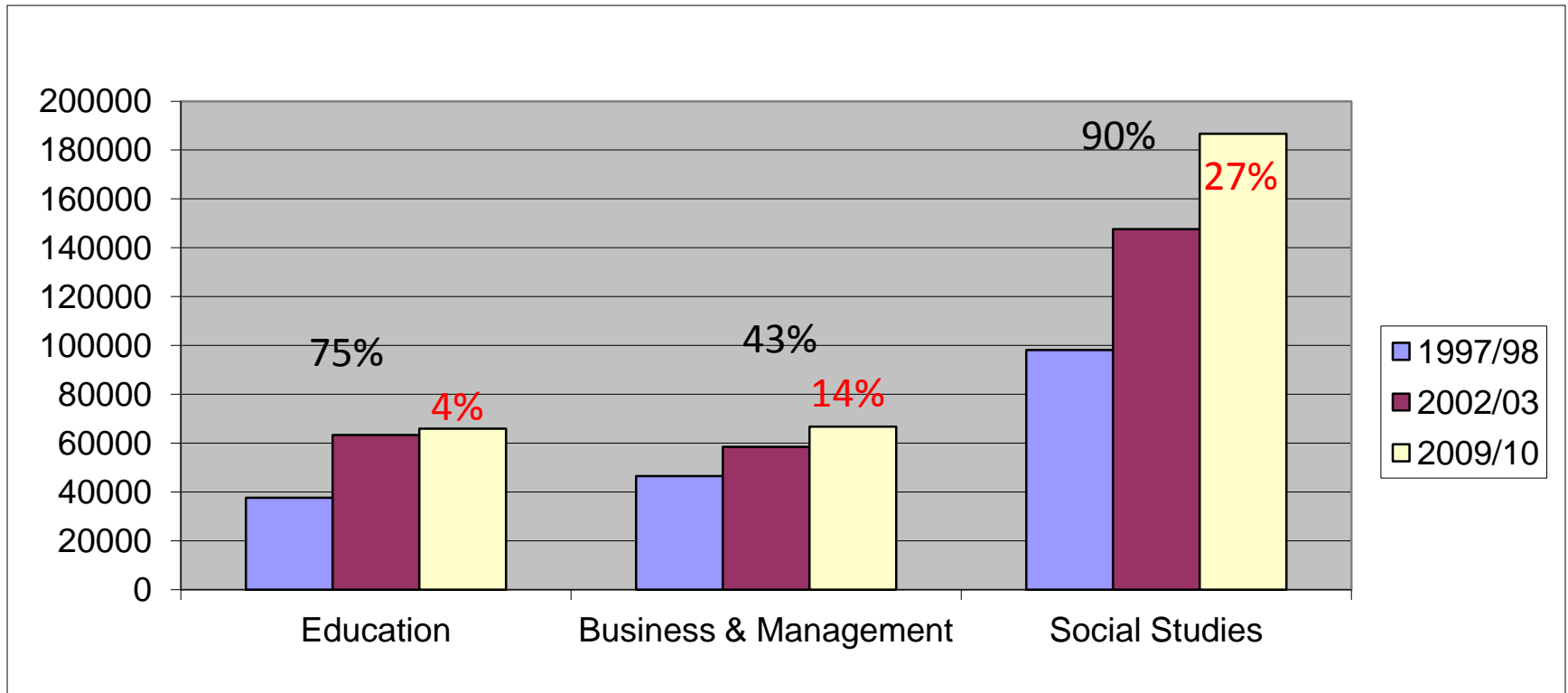
Funding

ESRC success rates 2001-2011



Funding

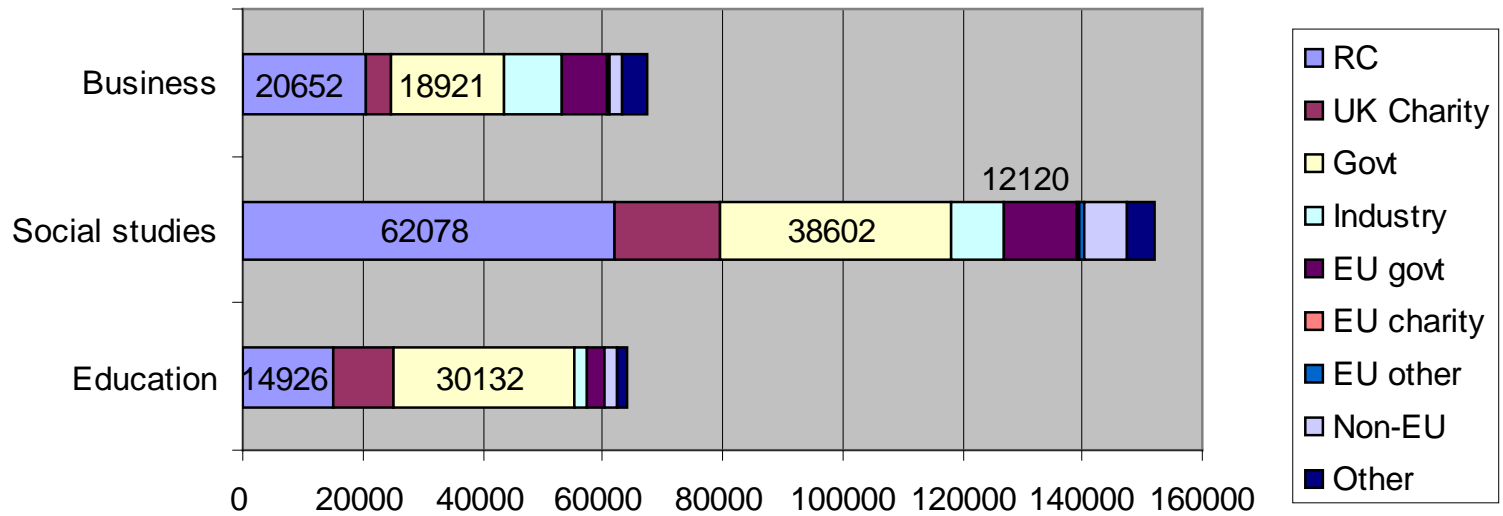
Research income reported to HESA education cost centre (real terms 2010/11)



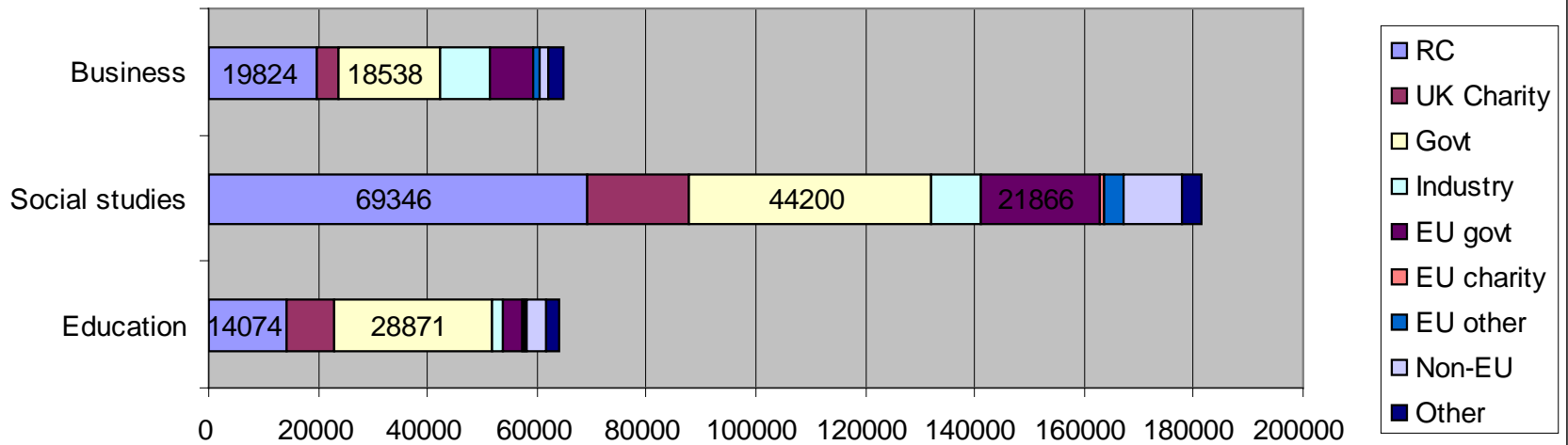
Black labels: % (of 1997) growth 1997-2010

Red labels: % growth 2002-2010

Research income 2008-09 (£000)



Research income 2009-10 (£000)



- Considerable change in infrastructure for education research relative to other social sciences
- Gradual rather than abrupt change for all disciplines

with
issues about relative status of disciplines
but



- On background of these trends, outlook may be particularly problematic for education

S

- Size and diversity of **education sector** and its market
- Some departments **recognised within HEIs** for their income generation
- Education still **priority** (economic rationale), partly protected from cuts
- Tradition of **cross-disciplinary** cooperation
- Established links between research, policy and practice – recognition of **public service role**

W

- **Fragmentation**
- Dependence on limited **government funding**
- **Conflicted strategic vision** across the sector and pressures towards increased inter-institutional competition
- Difficult **internal positioning of departments within HEIs** – pressures to downsize and diversify

O

- Current good **position/rewards** for **international and interdisciplinary** research across the board
- **Impact agenda** – education well placed
→ Re-tying research and practice
- Teacher educators to undertake **practice-based research**
- Growth in **publication outlets** (journalist) and outputs
- **Institutional support** to develop capacity and improve quality in research
- **Philanthropists'** interest and ESRC priority areas – opportunities to pitch

T

- **Scarce funding** sources in current economic and political climate
- **Increased selectivity** and changes in student funding
- **Abolition of public bodies**
- **Competition** for limited resources from increasing number of alternative providers (commercial, think tanks, social entrepreneurs)
- HE research's **position of authority** challenged
- **Pressures to separate research and teaching activity**
- Institutional **morale/ culture**
- **Staff profile** (late entry/ older profile)

A possible scenario?

“Might we not see a concentration of fewer, higher-quality, more assured HEIs? Aren’t there rather a lot at the moment, and some of them are pretty dubious on economics, viability and other issues? May we not see a consolidation at one level of HEIs, while spreading the engagement of schools? That is the Government vision, isn’t it?”

(Graham Stuart, Chair, House of Commons Education Committee, 7th December, 2011)

Moving forward

- So probably not 'crying wolf'
- Multiple challenges if not a 'perfect storm'
- Stress the importance of the field
- Mitigate threats where possible
- Seize available opportunities
- Develop partnerships - institutional, regional, national and international

Possibilities and problems

- Opportunities for more collaboration
- Emphasis on evidence-informed policy
- Partnerships and networks as basis for new forms of governance
- Practice-led research as basis for CPD in schools
- Teaching Schools and University Training Schools
- **BUT** greater transaction and opportunity costs for HEIs?

Your suggestions....

For reflection

- implications of the review's findings for different institutions and for the field in general
- strategies for the future, with particular focus on what BERA can do to support the advancement of the field