



Tender Specification

Project: 'Education: The State of the Discipline'

Tender: Equality and Diversity in University Education Departments

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) is the UK's leading learned society in the field of educational research representing over 2500 members. BERA is committed to advancing research quality, building research capacity and fostering research engagement. BERA aims to inform the development of policy and practice by promoting the best quality evidence produced by educational research.

Introduction to the State of the Discipline Project

BERA has had a long-standing interest in the state of education: as an academic discipline in universities, as a field of practice, and as a significant and central element of social and political policy. The State of the Discipline project forms a core part of BERA's strategic plan. The reports from each stage of the initiative are viewed as key to informing decision-making processes within BERA and beyond.

In the last decade the nature of work in universities has been subject to a range of significant changes. Some of these changes have been recognised by trade unions, for example increased casualisation of the workforce and changes towards more teaching-only contracts. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) also continues to be an influence on the ways universities work. Mindful of the ongoing changes within many UK universities, with resultant impacts on BERA members, BERA Council approved the development of an initiative to examine the state of education as a discipline taking account of the four nations of the UK.

The ultimate purpose of this project is to equip those interested in the development of education with the most objective and powerful information on which to base their advocacy for education. For example, a particularly important example of this advocacy will be better understanding of the numbers and characteristics of people employed in education departments, and other university departments, over time, and ways in which each next generation of education researchers can be encouraged to continue to grow the size, influence, and impact of education. One of the ways the State of the Discipline initiative is framed is in the definition of education is an academic discipline that shares characteristics with many other disciplines ([Wyse, 2020](#)), including those that have been established for much longer in universities worldwide. The work is also framed by, and builds on, BERA's long engagement with the intersections between education practice (including in teaching education/training e.g. BERA-RSA 2014) which in recent work has been articulated as 'close-to-practice-research (Wyse, Brown, Oliver & Poblete, 2020).

Prior Work Relevant to this Tender

In January 2020 BERA commissioned a systematic review (SR) which was designed to inform this project. The SR reviewed the research on the structures and processes – both formal and informal – that influence research activities in the UK. Following an open tender, the review was awarded to a team from Universities of Dundee and Exeter. Their final report was submitted to BERA in May 2021 and will be published in September 2021.

Concurrent Work on the Wider Project

Following consideration of the report and its recommendations by BERA's leadership committee, we are moving to the next stages of the project. In addition to the subject of this call, BERA will be commissioning three additional pieces of work that will form part of the wider project:

- A survey of education researchers' perceptions of their work and identities in relation to education research in universities in the United Kingdom.
- An 'observatory' that draws together the best and most current empirical data on the state of the education discipline.
- A history of UK educational research in recent decades which seeks to identify some of the key structures and influences.

Equality and Diversity in University Education Departments

We wish to commission research to gain a more detailed understanding of the profile of academic staff working in the UK in the discipline of education, with particular regard to equality and diversity and protected characteristics under the Equality Act.

Various sources of data indicate that there are fewer women and ethnic minority colleagues in senior academic roles (professors, readers, senior lecturers, heads of school and department) in our discipline. However, we do not have appropriate analyses of the data to look at career trajectories and seek to identify the points at which women and ethnic minority colleagues face barriers to progression, or at which they exit the profession.

As well as being part of the wider examination of the state of education as an academic discipline, this work is driven by our [Race Equality Policy](#) and our commitment to address racial inequities within the wider research community. It also affirms our commitment to bringing BERA's resources and expertise to bear on wider issues of inequality and discrimination in education and society.

In developing this particular project, we have taken inspiration from our colleagues in other learned societies, notably the work commissioned by the [British Sociological Association \(BSA\)](#) (Joseph-Salisbury et al., 2020) and more recently the [British International Studies Association \(BISA\) and Political Studies Association \(PSA\) \(Hanretty 2021\)](#). Their work has strongly influenced the nature of this tender and we wish to acknowledge that here.

We invite proposals that will look at the profile of staffing within education, including representation at more senior levels. Whilst being open to alternative suggestions, we are very impressed with the approach taken in the BISA/ PSA work which focused on three processes: attainment, promotion, and exit. In this context, attainment means the academic rank achieved by an individual at a single point in time, and in particular whether an individual has attained senior academic status

Promotion means any move from a more junior to a more senior academic status and exit means ceasing to work in UK higher education. We would like to see how these processes are affected by different demographic characteristics of academic staff. In particular, how attainment, promotion and exit are affected by sex, ethnicity, known disability, and nationality. These are all demographic characteristics of staff which are recorded by universities and submitted to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). We would also be interested in looking at entry points or access so that the whole cycle can be viewed.

We do not need to look at individual institutions because this work is designed to give us the picture of education as a discipline as a whole. Indeed, proposals should include a brief on how the proposers seek to undertake it, within the resources available. The proposal should include an ethical statement detailing how anonymity will be ensured and informed consent if any empirical material gathered beyond what is publicly available on websites, etc. is proposed.

Budget and Outline costing

Those wishing to tender for the work should include a budget indicating how the research will be conducted to meet the timeline for the interim and final reports; undertake the activities as indicated above; and successfully address the research questions. The amount allocated to this review is in the region of between £15,000-£20,000, **inclusive of VAT**.

Payment will be 40% at the start of the project upon signing of the contract, 30% upon receipt of the proposed data sets and 30% upon submission of the final report.

Timeline

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| Tender advertised on: | September 2021 |
| Proposals specifying the research team and their expertise, to be submitted by: | Monday 25 th October 2021 |
| Peer-reviews undertaken by BERA: | November 2021 |
| Possible interviews of shortlisted teams: | w/b 8 th November 2021 |
| Research team/ individual appointed: | w/b 15 th November 2021 |
| Interim report on data sets and and discussions with BERA | By end of February 2022 |
| Final report submitted | By end of April 2022 |
| Publication of report by BERA | Summer 2022 |

Oversight and management

This project is overseen by BERA Council, but the day-to-day management is delegated to BERA's Leadership Committee who will be the primary point of academic oversight and liaison. This group will manage the review process and report to BERA Council. Contractually, the successful team or individual will report to BERA's Chief Executive.

Application Process and Selection Criteria

Applicants should submit a proposal to BERA. Proposals should be no more than 2000 words excluding references. Short CVs (2 pages maximum per person) for all members of the proposed team should be included as appendices.

In the proposal, please include the following:

- A brief outline of previous published work relevant to the approach that you will take;
- Research design and research methods including timeline;
- Relevant experience of the team. Specifically, the team's relevant credentials and experience for undertaking the work; knowledge in the subject matter; and expertise in the proposed methodology;
- Suggested final output – including but not limited to word count.
- A detailed budget with justification for all costs.

The deadline for applications is 5pm on Monday 25th October 2021

Please submit to: director@bera.ac.uk ensuring that the title of the tender is clear in the email header.

In line with BERA's procedures, applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Quality of the proposals with regard to BERA's stated aims for the work;
- Expertise of the individual/ team in relation to the work;
- The individual/ team's understanding of and knowledge about education as an academic discipline;
- Track record in undertaking similar work;
- Value for money

Applications will be scored on a scale of 1-4 against these criteria. For further particulars about this role please contact:

Nick Johnson, BERA Chief Executive

director@bera.ac.uk

Research Ethics

The host organisation is responsible for ensuring that ethical issues relating to the research project are identified and brought to the attention of the relevant approval or regulatory body. Approval to undertake the research must be granted before any work requiring approval begins. Ethical issues should be interpreted broadly and may encompass, among other things, relevant codes of practice, the involvement of human participants, tissue or data in research, the use of animals, research that may result in damage to the environment and the use of sensitive economic, social or personal data. The [BERA Ethical Guidelines](#) can be found on our website.

Misconduct and Conflicts of Interest

The contracting organisation is required to have in place procedures for governing good research practice, and for investigating and reporting unacceptable research

conduct. They must on request provide information on its management of research integrity and ethics.

Liabilities

BERA accepts no responsibility, financial or otherwise, for expenditure or liabilities arising out of the research it funds, other than that specifically covered by the conditions of the grant and which has been incurred during the period covered by it. Any expenditure in excess of the approved grant cash limit, or expenditure incurred after the end date of the grant, are also the responsibility of the host organisation, and ineligible for BERA funding.

The books, records and financial procedures of the host organisation shall be open to inspection by BERA or any other body or individual engaged by BERA for the purpose of such inspection. The host organisation will, on request by BERA, provide accounts for the grant, independently examined by an auditor who is a member of a recognised professional body, certifying that the expenditure of the grant has been in accordance with all BERA conditions.

Intellectual property

Nothing in this Agreement will grant either party any rights in the Background IPR of the other. However, BERA will reserve the right to recommission or replicate the work in future through a new tendering process. In that case, we commit to ensuring that the successful team/ institution are notified of any further opportunities.

References and further reading

- British Academy & The Royal Society. (2018). Harnessing Educational Research. Retrieved from <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/royal-society-british-academy-educational-research/>
- British Educational Research Association & The Royal Society for the Arts (2014), Research and the Teaching Profession: Building the Capacity for a Self-Improving Education System. Retrieved from <https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/BERA-RSA-Research-Teaching-Profession-FULL-REPORT-for-web.pdf>
- Hanretty, C. (2021). Career trajectories in UK departments of politics and international relations, BISA/PSA.
- Oancea, A & Mills, D. (2015). The BERA Observatory. BERA.
- Joseph-Salisbury, R., Ashe, S., Alexander, C., and Campion, K (2020) Race and Ethnicity in British Sociology, BSA
- Wyse, D. (2020). Education: An academic discipline or a field? BERA Blog.
- Wyse, D., Brown, C. Oliver, S. & Poblete, X. (2020). Education Research and Educational Practice: The Qualities of a Close Relationship. British Educational Research Journal, DOI: 10.1002/berj.3626