



Tender Specification

Project: 'Education: The State of the Discipline'

Tender: A survey of education researchers' perceptions of their work and identities in relation to education research in universities in the United Kingdom

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).

This survey part of the State of the Discipline project, which we are now tendering for, will focus on education research occurring within universities across the UK, although we recognise that research activity is also conducted by practitioners in schools and colleges, and by independent researchers not formally linked to universities.

Prior Work Relevant to this Tender

In January 2020 BERA commissioned a systematic review (SR) which was designed to inform this survey. 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 the 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:

- An 'observatory' that draws together the best and most current empirical data on the state of the education discipline.
- An analysis of equality and diversity issues within the discipline.
- A history of UK educational research in recent decades which seeks to identify some of the key structures and influences.

A Survey of Educational Researchers in the UK

BERA wishes to commission an experienced team of researchers to carry out a survey of education researchers' perceptions of their work and identities in relation to education research in universities. The purposes of the survey are to a) provide robust data about the state of education as an academic discipline in universities in the UK; b) examine the structures and processes that influence opportunity for, and engagement in, research activity for staff working in university education departments. The survey will permit insight into the current situation within the discipline of education in relation to the experiences of individuals undertaking educational research across the UK.

The successful applicants will be required to take account of the prior SR in agreeing with BERA the final design of the survey, as the SR has identified some distinct themes which could inform its development.

The survey will need to ensure a balance of participants at different stages of their career including ECRs, across all four nations of the UK, and ensure ethnic diversity in the respondents.

Areas of importance to BERA that the survey will need to address include different career stages (e.g. early, mid and late-stage); differences between the four nations of the UK; career mobility including international mobility within and outside the UK; ethnicity, sex, gender identity, dis/ability; employment contract type (casual/permanent, teaching/research).

The proposed survey design must also show awareness of the latest developments in survey design methods.

It is desirable that the survey is designed in such a way that this exercise can be replicated at regular intervals to monitor trends within the discipline so that it can contribute to a longitudinal study of the state of the discipline.

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 credentials and experience for undertaking the survey; knowledge in the subject matter; and expertise in the proposed methodology;
- A detailed budget with justification for all costs.

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 survey 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.

Budget and 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 no more than **£50,000, inclusive of VAT**.

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

Timeline

Tender advertised:	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 22 nd November 2021
Research team appointed:	Monday 6 th December 2021
Survey to be undertaken:	January to April 2022
Interim report due:	1 st May 2022
Initial draft of findings part of report due:	30 th June 2022
Publication of report by BERA	September 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, you will report to BERA's Chief Executive.

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 proposed methodology and approach to the work in relation to BERA's aims for the work;
- expertise of the project team in relation to large scale survey methodology;
- relevance of team's expertise in relation to knowledge about education as an academic discipline;
- track record in undertaking similar surveys;
- value for money;
- overall quality of the proposal.

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

Nick Johnson, BERA Chief Executive: director@bera.ac.uk

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.
- 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