

## NRC study of the research doctorate – A long view of report release date

Lou McClelland, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2/1/09, **UPDATED 6/17/10**

From press articles listed in NRCArticles.xls

This document, the Excel of articles, and other documents of interest are posted at

[http://www.colorado.edu/pba/nrc/nrc\\_national.htm](http://www.colorado.edu/pba/nrc/nrc_national.htm)

### Report release dates

- 1982: First NRC study of the research doctorate released
- The 1995 study: September 22 1995, *Chronicle of Higher Education*: “The long-awaited study, four years in the making, updates and expands an assessment of graduate education last issued by the N.R.C. in 1982.”
  - <http://chronicle.com/che-data/articles.dir/art-42.dir/issue-04.dir/04a02001.htm>
- The 2009 study
  - January 10, 2003, *Chronicle of Higher Education*: “A panel of the National Research Council has proposed big changes in the methodology of its next survey of research-doctorate programs, to be completed in **2005**.”
    - <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v49/i18/18a01002.htm>
  - April 9, 2004, *Chronicle of Higher Education*: “The next edition, which was set for release in 2005, then delayed a year, has now been stalled until at least September **2007**, while the council scrambles to raise another \$4-million and clear up confusion regarding the data gathering and methodology.”
    - <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v50/i31/31a01001.htm>
  - December 13, 2004, *Chronicle of Higher Education*: “The National Research Council has again delayed publication of its widely respected survey, “Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States,” until at least September **2008**”
    - <http://chronicle.com/daily/2004/12/2004121306n.htm>
  - November 23, 2005, Inside Higher Education: “The next version will be released in **2007**, with data collection to begin next spring [2006].”
    - <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2005/11/23/graduate>
  - August 4, 2006, *Chronicle of Higher Education* (reporting from a meeting of the Council of Graduate Deans): “The final results of the study are due to be published at the end of **2007**.”
    - <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v52/i48/48a00801.htm>
  - October 17, 2007, *Chronicle of Higher Education*: “The National Research Council's much-delayed and highly influential assessments and rankings of doctoral programs will finally be unveiled on February 15 [**2008**], the project's director said in an interview on Tuesday.”
    - <http://chronicle.com/daily/2007/10/389n.htm>
  - November 29, 2007, *Chronicle of Higher Education*: “The influential report is now slated for release late next spring [**2008**]”
    - <http://chronicle.com/news/article/?id=3515>
  - March 14, 2008, *Chronicle of Higher Education*: “The unveiling of the National Research Council's assessments and rankings of American doctoral programs has been pushed back from ‘late spring’ to ‘early fall’ [**2008**]”
    - <http://chronicle.com/news/article/?id=4143>
  - September 24, 2008, *Chronicle of Higher Education*: A notice posted by NRC “says that the project's “methodology guide” — a preliminary report that will summarize the statistical techniques used in the new assessments — will be released in late October or early November. But no date has been set for the release of the assessments themselves.”
    - <http://chronicle.com/news/article/?id=5218>

- December 8, 2008, *Chronicle of Higher Education*: “Barring an earthquake, the National Research Council’s assessments and rankings of American doctoral programs will really, truly, finally be released in mid-February [2009], the project’s director said”
  - [http://chronicle.com/daily/2008/12/8111n.htm?utm\\_source=at&utm\\_medium=en](http://chronicle.com/daily/2008/12/8111n.htm?utm_source=at&utm_medium=en)
- December 17, 2008, Inside Higher Ed: “the methodology will be released some time in January, with the rankings coming out sometime from mid-February to mid-March [2009]. . . . NRC has decided to stop announcing scheduling delays and will not comment on the release date until one week prior to release.”
  - <http://insidehighered.com/news/2008/12/17/qt>
- January 2009: The methodology report release date was listed on the NRC website as January 15, then February 15. On January 23 the statement was changed to “The release of the Methodology Guide will occur at least one month before the final project report is released. The release schedule for the project report and its database will be announced when we have precise dates. Please check back to this page for dates. “
  - [http://sites.nationalacademies.org/pga/Resdoc/PGA\\_044475](http://sites.nationalacademies.org/pga/Resdoc/PGA_044475)

On the final page is a diagram – Long view, constructed 12/08 by Cathy Lebo.

*This shows the 2009 study with initial release date of 2006. The 2003 Chronicle article lists 2005 as the initial release date.*

#### Sources of delay

- Raising money to fund the study
- Issues with data collection and validation
- Analysis and reporting issues

#### Updated 6/17/10

- **July 9, 2009**, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, “The Wait for the National Research Council Rankings Continues” - “If you are one those in waiting for the [National Research Council \(NRC\)](#) to release its new rankings on U.S. doctoral programs, you will have to be patient a lot longer. The NRC doctoral ranking project, which began in 2003, just released [A Guide to the Methodology of the National Research Council Assessment of Doctorate Programs](#). The guide offers a sophisticated, 191-page explanation of the methodology that the NRC will use when it does publish the rankings, which will cover doctoral programs in 61 doctoral fields at 222 institutions. The NRC makes it very clear that it is not setting a date for the release of the rankings. Why, after all this time, is the NRC unable to set a firm date for when the new rankings will be published? The NRC’s website says:
  - *“With the publication of the Methodology Guide, we have completed a major milestone. The NRC and its committee feel an enormous obligation to produce data and rankings that are of the highest quality possible. Striving for this objective requires careful review of the data and rankings for over 5000 programs. This has already taken considerable time and is nearing completion. The committee must also finish summarizing the most important findings from the data, as well as discuss the strengths and shortcomings of the methodology for incorporation in the final report. The last step of the*

*process is for the final report to undergo the Academy's rigorous review. We are working to complete all this work as expeditiously as possible."*

- When the rankings finally are published, they will be produced in ranges and not as a single number. Each Ph.D. program will be assessed overall, as well as in depth in three areas: research activity, student support and outcomes, and student and faculty diversity.
  - <http://www.usnews.com/blogs/college-rankings-blog/2009/07/09/the-wait-for-the-national-research-council-rankings-continues.html>
- **August 31, 2009**, *Chronicle of Higher Education* "Assessment Denied: the National Research Council's Sins of Omission" – doctoral fields not included; over 25% according to based on data from the Survey of Earned Doctorates; "African-American, American Indian, and Mexican-American people, as well as women, are disproportionately likelier to have received Ph.D.'s in fields that are not included in the NRC's assessment, relative to white men and Asian-American people."
  - <http://chronicle.com/article/Sins-of-Omission/48233/>
- **May 10, 2010**, *Inside Higher Education*, "Methodology Change for Ph.D. Rankings" - The National Research Council -- responding to criticism it received in the internal peer review of its [forthcoming doctoral program rankings](#) -- is changing the methodology in a few key places for the long-awaited project.
- **June 13, 2010**, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "Doctoral-Program Rankings, Delayed Years, May Be Merely a Historical Record" – "The NRC report—a sequel to the research council's widely cited 1982 and 1995 rankings of doctoral programs—has been in the works since 2003. And in the works, and in the works. In November 2007 the research council booked space at a Washington hotel for a public unveiling of the report. But that release date came and went, and so did several subsequent ones. The most recent delays have sprung from peer reviewers' concerns about the report's complex statistical apparatus. Now there are signs that the report may finally see the light of day. At a conference in Chicago last month, the study's director, Charlotte V. Kuh, said the report would be released "soon," though she declined to be more specific."
  - <http://chronicle.com/article/After-Years-of-Delay-NRC/65918/>
- **From the NRC website: "WHAT'S NEW", Revised June 3, 2010** - The final report and database are undergoing review and, following completion of that process and preparation of the final manuscript, the report will be released. An announcement of the release date will be made at that time.
  - Charlotte Kuh gave [a presentation](#) on changes to the methodology at the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Association of Institutional Research (AIR).
  - Charlotte Kuh gave [a presentation](#) on the Methodology Guide at the Summer 2009 CGS Workshop.
  - Charlotte Kuh gave [a presentation](#) to the Association of Graduate Schools on September 2008.
  - Jim Voytuk gave [a presentation](#) at the Association of Institutional Research meeting in Seattle on May 28th, 2008 about the current status of the report.
  - Charlotte Kuh gave [a presentation](#) at the December 2007 CGS Annual Meeting about the methodology of ratings and the rollout of the report.
  - Copies of the questionnaires upon which the study results will be based can be found [here](#).
  - The National Research Council's Committee to Assess Research Doctorate Programs publicly released ***A Guide to the Methodology of the National***

**Research Council Assessment of Research Doctorate Programs** at 12 noon EDT on Thursday, July 9, 2009. An electronic copy of the PDF report was sent to all institutional coordinators at participating institutions. [Download the Guide free of charge.](#)

Please understand that this report is only a description of the methodology and is intended mainly for university staff who wish to understand how the assessment was conducted, and who will be asked to explain the results of the NRC Assessment to their presidents and provosts. It is not the final report and is not the assessment itself.

For the list of participating programs and institutions, see [here](#).

- The list of [participating institutions and their programs](#) has been posted. As of September 2008 there are 222 institutions participating in the Assessment of Research-Doctorate Programs. The study will include program data for over 5000 programs.
- Many have asked whether the study will include ratings and rankings. A simple answer is: yes, it is required by our charge. We understand, however, that the overall quality of a doctoral program is multi-dimensional and that a strictly ordered ranking misrepresents the varieties of ways that programs achieve quality as well as the varieties of attributes that potential students seek in a doctoral program. Thus, we propose to approach the rating task in a variety of ways. [Read more about rating and ranking.](#)

PROJECT TIMELINE

