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Leeds Beckett University Statement on the Responsible use of Research Indicators

1. This statement is a guide to the responsible use of research indicators in research assessment for Leeds Beckett University. It provides guidelines outlining good practice that reinforce the key role of expert judgement and support an inclusive and transparent process to research assessment, respectful of researchers and of the wide range of diverse types of research.
2. The principles draw on the recommendations made by DORA [Home | DORA \(sfdora.org\)](#); CoARA [CoARA - Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment](#); the Metric Tide revisited [Harnessing the Metric Tide: indicators, infrastructures & priorities for UK responsible research assessment. \(figshare.com\)](#); the principles of the Leiden Manifesto [Leiden manifesto for research Indicators - Home](#); and the UK Forum for Responsible Research Indicators – [The UK Forum for Responsible Research Indicators \(universitiesuk.ac.uk\)](#)

Defining Research Indicators

3. Research indicators can have a bibliometric, scientometric, informetric, or altmetric focus. There are different indicators available for use at the researcher, article and journal level,
4. Many of the quantitative indicators used in research assessment are citation-based bibliometric indicators such as citation counts; journal impact factors (JIFs); and the h-index. These are derived from the data found in Web of Science, Scopus, or in Google Scholar. These indicators are displayed in many commonly used sources, such as on publisher's journal web sites and in research systems such as Symplectic. Citation-based indicators vary significantly between fields, documents and types of outputs and so should never be used without such contextual considerations. It is therefore important that all staff involved in research, and not just those directly involved in the assessment of research, understand these indicators and their responsible use.
5. Alternative metrics (altmetrics) are a relatively new kind of indicator which provide information about attention to research outputs in social media such as Twitter/X and information about captures, shares and number of views and downloads. There are still many uncertainties and concerns about these developing indicators, including about their reliability. For this reason, the UK Forum for Responsible Research Indicators recommends that altmetrics should not be used in REF style evaluations of outputs. although there may be some scope for their use in assessment of impact.

Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Indicators

6. The University views research indicators as a resource which, when used responsibly, can support academic staff to achieve research excellence through publishing and disseminating their research in the most appropriate arena relevant to their subject and discipline. The University also recognises that the relevance and appropriateness of indicators varies across disciplines and that their use is both complex and contentious. It is the University's view that a discipline-appropriate range of measures and judgements provides a more balanced consideration of research than any single measure, reflecting the many ways research can be considered successful, as well as minimising biases and preconceptions.

7. The University permits, but will never require, the use of research indicators in support of any claims for the quality or impact of research and innovation. The impacts of research may be long-term and indirect, and as such the absence of high indicator scores should not be seen as an absence of quality or impact of the research.
8. . Some research indicators, and especially career-based research indicators such as total publication count and the h-index, have in-built biases against women or colleagues with temporary and permanent disabilities. Their use should be avoided.
9. Indicators will play a role in some disciplines in informing peer review in the Research Excellence Framework.
10. The University adopts the principles set out by the Metric Tide Report (2015) Circular (ukri.org) and its 2022 update Harnessing the Metric Tide: indicators, infrastructures & priorities for UK responsible research assessment. (figshare.com)

Research Indicators should be seen and understood through the lens of the following dimensions:

- **Robustness:** basing metrics on the best possible data in terms of accuracy and scope;
- **Humility:** recognising that quantitative evaluation should not supplant qualitative, expert assessment, but should be used where appropriate to strengthen or complement peer review.
- **Transparency:** opening up data collection and analytical processes, so those being evaluated are included in the design of the evaluation and can test and verify the results.
- **Diversity:** accounting for variation by field and using a range of indicators to reflect and support a plurality of research, of research and research-enabling staff characteristics, and researcher career paths across the system.
- **Reflexivity:** recognising and anticipating the systemic and potential effects of indicators and updating them in response.

Responsible use of Research Indicators - A developing agenda

11. There are a number of initiatives focusing on the responsible use of research indicators at the individual and institutional levels, including:
 - [Rankings | INORMS](#) which is considering a community-developed list of criteria for fair and responsible research assessment.
 - [AGORRA - Research on Research](#) which is fostering a culture of analysis, experimentation, and review amongst researchers in the design, delivery, and evaluation of assessment processes.
 - The UK Reproducibility Network's Open and Responsible Research Assessment (OR4) project

The University will engage with these sector initiatives to share good practice and to regularly update guidance to researchers.