Leeds Beckett University Statement on the Responsible use of Research Metrics

Organisation	Leeds Beckett University
Author(s)	Stuart Morris (REF & Research Policy Manager)
Developed in consultation with	Dr Tina Conkar (Head of Research Information Governance) Ellie Clement (Library Academic Support Team Manager)
Owner	Research & Enterprise Services
Target audience	Staff & Students
Sensitivity	Public
Approved by	Research & Enterprise Committee
Endorsed by	Committee/Executive Group
Effective date	17-06-2022
Review Date	+01 year from last date of approval [06-2023]
Status	Published
External references	• FFRRM: https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/research-policy/open-science/Pages/forum-for-responsible-research-metrics.aspx • DORA: https://sfdora.org/ • Metric Tide: https://re.ukri.org/sector-guidance/publications/metric-tide/ • Leiden Manifesto: http://www.leidenmanifesto.org/
Links to other internal policies / procedures	n/a
Version reference	1.01
Version History - summary of changes	Statement was reviewed for currency and no changes proposed other than the addition of this cover sheet. Implementation plan refreshed to promote further engagement with the Statement.

Scope

1. This statement applies to all staff within the University and postgraduate research (PGR) students ("researchers").

Roles and Responsibilities

2. It is the responsibility of all staff and PGR students to engage with the principles set out in this statement.

3. It is the responsibility of the Research & Enterprise Services, Deans, and Directors of Research, or their nominated representatives, to ensure that this statement is widely disseminated and understood by staff and PGR students.

4. It is the responsibility of Research & Enterprise Services to audit engagement with this Statement.

Purpose

5. This statement is a guide to responsible research assessment for Leeds Becket University. It provides a set of principles 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 different types of research.

6. The principles draw on the recommendations made by DORA (2013), the Metric Tide (2015) and the principles of the Leiden Manifesto (2015), the UK Forum for Responsible Research Metrics – FFRRM (2017).

Definitions

7. 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 metrics are displayed in many commonly used sources, such as on publisher's journal web sites and in research systems such as Symplectic. 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.

8. Alternative metrics ('altmetrics') are a relatively new kind of indicator which provide information about attention to research outputs in social media such as Twitter and information about captures, shares and number of views and downloads. There are still many uncertainties and concerns about these developing metrics, including about their reliability. For this reason, the UK Forum for Responsible Research Metrics 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 Metrics

9. The University recognises the important role that metrics can have in facilitating research and improving research visibility and impact. The University views metrics as a resource which, used responsibly, support staff to achieve research excellence and to publish in high quality journals. The University also recognises that the relevance and appropriateness of metrics 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.

10. The University acknowledges the need for fairness and transparency in the increasing use of quantitative indicators in the external measurements of our reputation, as measured by league tables and funding agencies.

11. Information on research activity is currently used in a variety of settings across the University, including but not limited to recruitment, promotion, monitoring and reporting of individual and institutional research performance, and in the Research Excellence Framework.

12. Purely quantitative metrics influence league tables and the major funding bodies. Metrics will play a role in some disciplines in informing peer review in the research excellence framework. While peer review remains the primary method of research assessment, the increasing amounts of quantitative information available both within and outside the University can provide useful contextual information.

Principles:

13. The principles set out below outline the University's approach to the responsible use of metrics.

    Principle 1: Quantitative indicators should be used to support not replace peer-review:

    The University recognises the value of quantitative indicators to support qualitative, expert peer review. Indicators may be used in a variety of individual-level processes including recruitment, probation, reward, promotion, development appraisal and performance review but indicators will not replace expert peer assessment of research outputs, research applications and awards, PGR supervisions, or any other research activity. It is recognised that the balance between quantitative and qualitative approaches will vary by discipline.

    Principle 2: Clearly Communicate Research Evaluation Methods:

    There should always be clearly articulated reasons for the incorporation of quantitative indicators. Decision-makers will ensure that information to be used is clearly

communicated well in advance to those being assessed. Any quantitative indicator from either internal or external sources used should be accessible, valid, and open to scrutiny.

Principle 3: Differences between research disciplines should be accounted for:

It is recognised that research practices in disciplines vary widely and indicators, particularly bibliometric indicators, serve some disciplines better than others. Contextual information on any disciplinary differences in research indicators should be provided to those undertaking assessment (for example average grant sizes, common publication routes, citing conventions) and explicitly acknowledged by them. It should be recognised when it is not appropriate to provide certain types of quantitative data; for example, citation data are not reliable for arts and humanities disciplines. It is recommended that appropriate caveats regarding likely differences between research fields should be acknowledged in any analysis.

Principle 4: Journal-level indicators should not be used exclusively to determine the quality of papers:

Journal-level indicators (e.g. JIF) assess journals and should not be used solely to predict the quality of individual papers. High-impact papers can be found in low-impact journals and vice versa. While there is likely to be a broad correlation of journal quality and paper quality it is not necessarily prescriptive. Furthermore, calculation of the Journal Impact Factor does not account for any of the following: publication type (reviews tend to be cited more frequently than articles), research field (e.g. biomedical research is published more frequently and is quicker to accumulate citations than engineering research), journal publication frequency, career stage, skewed underlying data (citation counts do not follow a normal distribution). It is recommended that paper quality should be assessed using peer review and where appropriate for the discipline, informed by normalised citation impact data.

Principle 5: A combination of indicators should be used, not a single measure in isolation:

It is important that research assessment seeks a variety of perspectives; it is recommended that a suite of quantitative indicators be used rather than a single measure in isolation. Single measures in isolation are unlikely to provide the nuance required for robust evidence-based decision making. The expectation is that multiple indicators are used in any analytical approach.

Principle 6: Data sources should be reliable, robust, accurate and transparent:

The University will ensure that the most reputable and robust metrics are used and will undertake to scrutinise and revise, when necessary, commonly used metrics, at both a local and institutional level, in line with institutional strategy. Internal assessment processes and methods should be open, transparent and documented. Where the work of researchers is being assessed, they should be able to check that their outputs have been correctly identified and there should be mechanisms in place for requesting corrections in the source systems if required. The University acknowledges that changes in the wider research

environment can change the usefulness of individual metrics, and that there will be discipline-dependent factors.

Principle 7: Misplaced concreteness and false precision should be avoided:

Use metrics only where their strengths, weaknesses and limitations are understood and where placing undue significance on quantitative differences could be avoided. Include caveats responsibly in research assessment data and reports. Undertake regular reassessment of any indicators used. The systemic effects of assessment and indicators should be recognised. Anticipate and mitigate any unintended effects established by using indicators by encouraging researcher feedback and review.

Principle 8: Data analysis processes should be open, transparent and simple and researchers should be given the opportunity to verify their data:

Where possible, the criteria of evaluation should be available to researchers and the quantitative indicators used should be easily reproducible. Awareness of potential factors that could bias interpretation of the data should be raised.

Principle 9: Research indicators and data sources should be regularly reviewed and updated:

The systems of evaluation that are used should be sensitive to the evolving needs as an institution, responsive to the changing nature of the research landscape and reflexive. As the institutional understanding of quantitative indicators increases, the institution should also seek to enhance the measures used.