

Leeds Beckett University Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Indicators

This statement is a guide to the responsible use of research indicators in research assessment for Leeds Beckett University. It outlines sector good practice, reinforces the key role of expert judgement, and supports an inclusive and transparent process to research assessment, respectful of researchers and of the wide range of diverse types of research.

The principles draw on the recommendations made by responsible metrics initiatives, including [DORA](#); [CoARA - Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment](#); the [UK Forum for Responsible Research Metrics](#), the [INORMS' Scope framework for responsible research evaluation](#), and the [UK Reproducibility Network](#).

Defining Research Indicators

1. Sometimes referred to as research metrics, research indicators are quantitative measures that can have a bibliometric, scientometric, informetric, or altmetric focus.
2. There are different indicators available for use at the article level (e.g. citation counts or Field-Weighted Citation Impact), journal level (e.g. Journal Impact Factor JIF), and researcher level (e.g. h-index).
3. These indicators are typically derived from the data found in Web of Science, Scopus, or in Google Scholar, and displayed in many commonly used sources, such as on publisher's journal websites and in research systems such as Symplectic Elements.
4. Citation-based indicators vary significantly between fields, documents and types of outputs and so should never be used without such contextual considerations. The Field-Weighted Citation Impact is a more sophisticated indicator, normalising the citation performance by field, year and document type. But it still contains subject classification, data, language and other biases. It is therefore important that all colleagues 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 news and some social media such as Bluesky or 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 coverage and 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 the assessment of impact.
6. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are emerging that have the capacity to track a wider range of research indicators over longer timeframes and diverse sources. However, the

reliability and transparency of such tools is still uncertain and there are concerns that AI may perpetuate inherent biases in research indicators.

Leeds Beckett University's Approach to Research Indicators

7. 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 vary 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.
8. 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.
9. 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. The University actively discourages their use.
10. Research indicators will play a role in some disciplines in informing peer assessment in the Research Excellence Framework. The University will consider such REF guidance in its own peer review processes.
11. The University adopts the principles set out by the Metric Tide Report (2015) and its 2022 update *Harnessing the Metric Tide: indicators, infrastructures & priorities for UK responsible research assessment*, specifically:
 - **Robustness:** basing indicators 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, a diversity of research outputs 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.
12. The University will engage with sector initiatives to share good practice and to regularly update guidance and training to researchers. This supports our commitment to the University values of integrity and inclusivity and helps to build a supportive research culture across all disciplines and career stages.