THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics

The University of Edinburgh has agreed a set of principles on the use of quantitative data/metrics on research activity which directs all research evaluation and assessment undertaken at the University.

For the purposes of this statement, 'quantitative data', 'metrics' and 'indicators' refer to the range of numeric data available both within and outside the University on research activity, such as bibliometrics (citations analysis), altmetrics (twitter, media use), application and award data, research income, postgraduate training, and discipline-specific quantitative standards on research activity.

These principles extend the aspirations set out in the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (2012; DORA), and align with the positions set out in The Metric Tide (2015; commissioned by HEFCE; now Research England) and the Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics (2015).

The University has agreed to become a signatory to the San Francisco DORA, which aims to:

"advance practical and robust approaches to research assessment globally and across all scholarly disciplines".

This statement is intended to guide research assessment in its broadest sense across the University, both at individual and collective levels. It is for Schools and departments to form more detailed implementation policies as and when required, building on this framework.

Context

The University of Edinburgh values the diverse and excellent communities of researchers across its three Colleges, who contribute to our central mission to 'deliver impact for society, and to discover, develop and share knowledge'. It is therefore critical that information relating to research activity is used appropriately within the University.

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. 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. It is the University's view that a discipline-appropriate 'basket of measures and judgements' provides a more nuanced and balanced consideration of research than any single measure, reflecting the many different ways research can be considered successful, as well as minimising biases and preconceptions. Within such a basket of qualitative and quantitative judgements, metrics play an important role at the University level, both in identifying current and potential activities of merit, and in informing resource allocation.

Achieving effective and positive use of metrics as part of a wider toolbox to support and grow our research activities requires a partnership approach between individuals, Schools, Colleges and the wider University. The University acknowledges that no quantitative data source(s) alone can provide a complete measure of research quality or activity.

The expectation, therefore, in all research assessment at the University is that a transparent set of both qualitative and quantitative information is used to support and inform expert *human* academic judgement.

The University will:

1) Ensure transparent, fair and appropriate use of information to support effective decision-making in research evaluation

The University expects that all decision-makers will use a consistent and discipline-appropriate range of established quantitative (e.g. outputs, citations, grant applications, grant/commercial income, activities & impact, conference invitations, peer reviews) and qualitative information (e.g. biosketches, esteem indicators) available to them across the full range of research activity to support research evaluation, whilst understanding and acknowledging any limitations. No **minimum** performance objectives or targets will be set on the basis of a quantitative measure for which the individual cannot reasonably control the outcomes (e.g. grant income alone). The University will provide clear information to staff on how any quantitative data will be used in making decisions that affect the career opportunities for individuals.

2) Clearly Communicate Research Evaluation Methods

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, validatable, and open to scrutiny.

3) Use Suitable Indicators

The University will undertake at intervals to scrutinise and revise, when necessary, commonly used metrics, or 'basket of measures' at both a local and institutional level, in line with institutional strategy. This acknowledges that changes in the wider research environment can change the usefulness of individual metrics, and that there will be discipline-dependent factors.

4) Use Appropriate Quantitative Metrics, either Normalised or presented with Suitable Context

Quantitative metrics used in a research evaluation context will be appropriately normalised using an established method (e.g. field-weighted citation impact) or otherwise presented with suitable context (e.g. research income range by subject) where possible to take account of discipline, interdisciplinarity, career stage, full-time/part-time status, and any other relevant factors, including protected characteristics.

5) Maintain Transparent Data Collection, Linkage and Reporting

The University undertakes to provide transparent data collection, linkage and reporting of research activity data, which is clearly visible to research staff. Researchers will be provided with clear sign-posting for all relevant systems for requesting corrections to data. The University will undertake to complete corrections as soon as practical.

Working in partnership with individuals, the University aims to ensure that:

Research activity is appropriately and fairly recognised through accurate records. The University seeks to maximise opportunities and support for researchers, and to ensure all research activity is appropriately recognised and attributed. Researchers have a key role to play in ensuring their data is representative and correct. Information held about their research activity by the University or personally provided is expected to be accurate and up-to-date. This includes:

- All relevant outputs, such as software, articles, IP, policy impact, PGR students, etc.
- Appropriate attribution of credit for outputs based on scholarly contribution.
- Notifying line managers of any instances of inappropriate use of metrics in line with this policy.

Research activity data held at an individual level by the University is available through Edinburgh Research Explorer. The University provides mechanisms for requesting correction in source systems if required. The University expects staff to seek correction of errors in research data that is held externally, and will support them as part of its duty of care to staff and to protect the University's reputation.

Policy History and Review

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