

## 1 Introduction and Purpose

### 1.1 Introduction

As a signatory to DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment)<sup>1</sup>, the University is committed to promoting responsible research metrics that value diverse outputs and avoid over-reliance on journal-based indicators.

The University is committed to:

- Upholding the integrity of all research outputs by affiliated authors
- Ensuring equitable and transparent evaluation for progression opportunities.
- Demonstrating and understanding the influence and impact of our research.

### 1.2 Purpose

This policy sets out the University's approach to the use of metrics in research assessment, guided by the principles of DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment) and the Leiden Manifesto<sup>2</sup>. It reflects national expectations, including UKRI's funding terms and conditions<sup>3</sup> which require fair and transparent research assessment practices, and the requirement for the adoption of responsible research assessment practices in the selection of outputs for the REF 2029 submission<sup>4</sup>. It should be read alongside the policies listed in [Section 5](#).

## 2 Scope

This policy covers the evaluation of all types of research outputs, including, but not limited to, peer-reviewed publications, datasets, and software.

The principles should be applied in the selection, presentation and interpretation of publication and citation metrics.

The principles should inform decision-making where evidence of research outputs quality or bibliometrics may be used in university processes such as in:

- academic recruitment
- promotion and professorial banding
- probation
- PDRs
- internal funding decisions
- REF 2029 research output assessments

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<sup>1</sup> [DORA \(San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics](#)

<sup>3</sup> [UKRI Funding Terms and Conditions: Item 45](#)

<sup>4</sup> [REF 2029 Code of Practice Guidance: Section 12.10 – Policies and procedures and responsible research assessment practice](#)

## 2.1 Who is affected?

This Policy applies to all Royal Holloway University staff, Emeritus Readers and Professors, honorary affiliates and external partners, collaborators, contractors and any other external person involved in producing or evaluating research within Royal Holloway University. This group are referred to as University representatives.

## 3 Policy Statement

### 3.1 Principles for the Responsible Use of Metrics

**Expert judgment first:** research evaluation should be grounded in expert peer review. Metrics can complement, but not replace, qualitative assessment. Quantitative metrics may be used to support and inform this judgement where this is appropriate context for a particular disciplinary field.

**Focus on the research itself:** it is recognised that reviewers will have field-specific knowledge regarding the variation in quality and rigour of peer review and reach of journals and other publication venues in their disciplines. However, such extrinsic factors should only be featured alongside intrinsic evaluations of the output and not used as a proxy for qualitative assessment of research quality.

**Integrity over incentives:** responsible use of metrics should align with our commitment to research integrity and avoid incentivising behaviors that run counter to this.

**Context matters:** different disciplines use metrics differently. A one-size-fits-all approach is inappropriate. Using metrics when assessing recently published research can be challenging, as meaningful indicators often take time to develop.

**Use transparent and recognised metrics:** choose well-understood indicators, including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice, where appropriate. When using new metrics, evaluate their validity and susceptibility to misuse.

**Multiple metrics preferred:** when metrics are used, best practice is to use multiple indicators to provide a more complete picture.

**Normalise where necessary:** adjust metrics for field, career stage, and time to ensure fair comparisons.

### 3.2 Expectations for University representatives

Royal Holloway expects all individuals involved in research evaluation to:

- assess whether the use of metrics is appropriate and genuinely enhances expert judgment, rather than replacing it
- use metrics transparently, providing clear, plain-language explanations that describe the data, its meaning, limitations, and reliability
- clearly define the purpose or question of any analysis before selecting metrics or methods. In line with the Leiden Manifesto, performance should be measured against the specific research goals of the individual, group, or institution
- avoid relying on single metrics when making critical decisions. Where possible, use more than one metric to verify assessments and normalised where appropriate- for example, to account for disciplinary differences or career stages.
- regularly review and evaluate the continued relevance and effectiveness of commonly used metrics to ensure they remain suitable and meaningful.

Metrics must be applied with care and appropriate justification. They should not be used:

- without clear rationale. Metrics must be tailored to the specific question being addressed, the data available and the intended purpose of the assessment.

- when the data is too limited or incomplete to support a meaningful or reliable interpretation
- as the sole basis for decisions that impact an individual personally, particularly in matters of employment, recognition, reward or reputation. In such cases, metrics should complement, not replace informed expert qualitative evaluation.

## 4 Roles and Responsibilities

All staff involved in decision-making where evidence of research outputs quality or bibliometrics may be used have a responsibility to follow the principles and expectations as outlined in this policy.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy at University level.

Research and Innovation are responsible for:

- developing and managing content and guidance within the scope of this Policy
- providing information readily available to all that require it to support compliance with the Policy
- ensuring the University approach to the responsible use of research metrics is clearly written into REF 2029 processes and the REF 2029 Code of Practice
- ensuring any internal funding calls run by the directorate include appropriate reference to the responsible use of research metrics

Library Services are responsible for supporting the provision of content and guidance within the scope of this policy.

Human Resources are responsible for:

- ensuring panel packs and guidance include appropriate reference to the responsible use of research metrics
- ensuring training for panel chairs incorporate appropriate reference to RRM

Faculty Deans and Associate Deans (Research & Knowledge Exchange) are responsible for ensuring decision-making where evidence of research outputs quality or bibliometrics may be used within their faculties follow the principles and expectations as outlined in this policy.

Heads of Department have responsibility for ensuring decision-making where evidence of research outputs quality or bibliometrics may be used within their departments follow the principles and expectations as outlined in this policy.

Departmental Research leads responsible for:

- promoting awareness of the policy and associated guidance among their colleagues
- providing disciplinary insights into the appropriate use of research metrics.

REF Unit of Assessment (UoA) Leads responsible for implementation within their UoA with regards to REF research output assessments.

## 5 Monitoring and Compliance

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) has overall responsibility for the Policy.

A series of actions designed to drive work related to the Responsible Research Metrics (RRM) policy have been added to a RRM Tracker. Progress will be monitored by RKEC or a nominated subgroup.

This Policy shall be reviewed at least every three years, led by the Head of Policy and Integrity.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following University Policies and Procedures:

- [Code of Good Research practice](#)
- [Open Access Policy](#)
- [Research data management policy](#)

- [Data protection policy](#)
- [Research misconduct policy](#)

If anyone considers that this policy has not been followed, in the first instance they should raise this matter with the Policy and Integrity Team at [integrity@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:integrity@rhul.ac.uk).

Non-compliance with the Responsible Research Metrics policy may be considered research misconduct, please see the [Research Misconduct policy](#) and its associated procedures for more information.

## 6 Related documents

### 6.1 Guidance

Guidance on the appropriate use of different metrics in research assessment will be made available on the University's research intranet pages to support staff in applying metrics responsibly.

### 6.2 References

1. [DORA \(San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment\)](#)
2. [The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics](#)
3. [UKRI Funding Terms and Conditions: Item 45](#)
4. [REF 2029 Code of Practice Guidance: Section 12.10 – Policies and procedures and responsible research assessment practice](#)

### 6.3 Further reading and resources

- World Conferences on Research Integrity [Hong Kong principles](#).
- [The Metric Tide \(2015 Independent Report\)](#)
- Wellcome Trust [Guidance for research organisations on how to implement responsible and fair approaches for research assessment](#)
- European University Association (EUA), Science Europe, and the European Commission [agreement on reforming research assessment \(CoARA\)](#)
- [Overview of the UK Forum for Responsible Research Metrics](#)
- [UK Reproducibility Network \(UKRN\)'s Statement on Responsible Research Evaluation](#)
- [International Network of Research Management Societies \(INFORMS\) scope model](#)
- [Plan S Principles \(Principle 10\)](#)

## 7 Document Control Information

<b>Policy title</b>	Responsible research metrics policy	
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<b>Operational Owner</b>	Head of Policy and Integrity	
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