

# University of Liverpool

## Policy for the responsible use of metrics in research assessment

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<b>Approval Route</b>	<b>Committee</b>	<b>Submission Date</b>	<b>Approved?</b>
	Senate	24 March 2021	Yes
	Council	25 May 2021	Yes
<b>Linked Documents</b>	<i>Code of Practice for the Annual Assessment of Individual Research Performance</i>		
<b>Consultation</b>	<i>The Policy and its implementation plan was consulted and shared with the following groups of stakeholders: Research and Impact Strategy Committee (RISC), Research and Impact Committee (RIC), Key Personnel from Human Resources, The Governance Team, Research Staff Association (RSA), Key Academics All research active staff and academics had the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft policy.</i>		
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<p>Summary of Impact Assessment (a full <a href="#">Equality Impact Assessment</a> is available):</p> <p>By affirming that staff must not use in recruitment or assessment processes any metrics related to venue of publication or to number (rather than quality) of publications*, the policy aims to prevent possible indirect disadvantaging of researchers from groups such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• those more likely to have had career breaks;</li> <li>• those near the start of their academic career;</li> <li>• those whose careers have largely been spent outside academia;</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>those from countries with typically low publication rates in Web of Science-indexed journals**</li> </ul> <p>The policy has been presented at meetings in all academic departments, and was informed by an institution-wide survey that received 209 responses. None of the survey responses raised any concerns regarding the policy and equality groups.</p> <p>*Such metrics include Journal Impact Factor, h-index, and total citations</p> <p>** Only journals indexed in the web of Science have Journal Impact Factors.</p>
<b>Data Protection</b>	<p><b>Please consider:</b></p> <p><i>If there are any data protection implications</i></p> <p><i>If a Data Protection Impact Assessment form has been completed state the key findings/risk mitigation and please provide a copy of the report.</i></p>

## INTRODUCTION

In our [Strategy 2026](#), we have affirmed our aim of generating and demonstrating world-leading research excellence and outstanding impact, and supporting a large, thriving community of researchers. The University recognises that the responsible and ethical use of metrics has the potential to help improve the visibility and the impact of its research and ensures fair assessment of researchers. This Policy outlines how the University uses metrics related to research outputs and complements the *Code of Practice for the Annual Assessment of Individual Research Performance*.

The University of Liverpool is a signatory to the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) which outlines a number of recommendations around the use of metrics. This means that as an institution we have committed to avoiding the use of journal-based metrics as surrogate measures of the quality of research in decision-making for funding, appointing and promoting staff, and to assess contributions of individual researchers, and instead assess research based on its own merits.

## SCOPE

This Policy sets out the University of Liverpool's approach to the use of metrics in research assessment. Its scope is necessarily high-level, and it is expected that particular situations (e.g. metrics usage for the reading programme or particular metric use in individual research units) may require additional supporting documentation which will be developed when necessary. It is recognised that the use and usefulness of metrics varies widely across subject areas. This Policy applies to the use of metrics for University staff and research students for internal evaluation purposes and in support of their aims and development.

## GOVERNANCE

Formal Senior Leadership Team has ultimate responsibility for the University's use of metrics. University Research & Impact Committee will be the body responsible for effective oversight and management, including review of metrics usage in light of changing external factors. Library and Research & Impact Strategy staff will provide practical support for the effective and appropriate usage of research quality indicators (practical guidance on implementation will be developed together with each Faculty, and training on the responsible use of metrics will be provided). Faculties and, as

appropriate, Institutes, Schools and departments, are responsible for the selection and application of discipline-specific metrics, ensuring that they remain in line with the University policy and statement and taking advantage of the professional guidance and support provided by the University.

## PRINCIPLES FOR USE OF METRICS IN RESEARCH ASSESSMENT

Research assessment at the University must be holistic, transparent and inclusive of multiple research outputs, each given sufficient weight. In some instances, externally supplied bibliometrics can be used as supporting evidence to expert peer review. However, it must be widely understood that metrics are limited and often a reflection of popularity, not necessarily quality. Therefore, metrics have to be considered carefully, not in isolation, and calibrated to the correct context.

The use of metrics in research assessment at the University of Liverpool must be:

- 1) Complementary to Peer review: quantitative evaluation can support – but should not supplant – qualitative, expert assessment.**
- 2) Transparent: those being evaluated must be fully aware of how metrics will be used in their evaluation.**
  - Being transparent about how external metrics are used by decision-makers.
  - Expectations, internal data collection and analytical processes are open and transparent so that those being evaluated can test and verify the results.
- 3) Inclusive: accounting for variation by field, institutional goals as well as professional and personal circumstances.**
  - Assessing researchers against the research missions of the institution, groups or individuals and evaluate how specific research goals were met.
  - Normalising metrics to account for disciplinary differences (citation count varies greatly between (sub)disciplines and should not be compared).
  - Accounting for a range of factors when assessing research, evaluating the whole portfolio of researchers (e.g. considering FTE equivalent, career length, career break, professional background).
- 4) Robust: considering suitable metrics in terms of accuracy, scope and context.**
  - Considering a range of bibliometrics and/or altmetrics in the correct context from matching sources (e.g. do not mix data from different providers such as Scopus and Web of Science).
  - Considering metrics related to publications rather than the venue of publication (journal-based metrics, e.g. Journal Impact Factor™, SJR or SNIP) or the author (e.g. h-index).
- 5) Regularly reviewed: recognising the effects of metrics, update them regularly and champion best practice.**

## UNIVERSITY RESPONSIBILITIES

The University is responsible for:

- ensuring that metrics are used only in compliance with the above principles;

- providing appropriate access to and training on the use of appropriate tools for accessing and analysing publication, collaboration and citation data used by the University and external bodies;
- providing best practice guidance and operational support;
- engaging proactively with funders, collaborators and regulators to ensure metric usage is responsible beyond the University.

## **INDIVIDUAL STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

Individual staff are responsible for:

- ensuring they adhere to University policy and understand the limitations of metrics;
- ensuring that their individual records are up to date, complete and accurate;
- using metrics in a responsible way, having undertaken all relevant training.