

The Responsible Use of Research Metrics at the University of Portsmouth

Part 2

The Portsmouth Principles governing Research Evaluation and Assessment

Principle 1:

We view the content of a paper as much more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it is published (based on DORA recommendation 1).

We do not view journal rankings and Journal Impact Factors (JIF) as surrogate measures regarding the quality of individual research articles. This principle was firmly enshrined in our approach to REF2021, for example, where our [Code of Conduct](#) stated: “Assessment of the quality of outputs is based on academic judgement, and is developed through a combination of self-assessment, internal peer review, and external expert assessment (P.15).”

Principle 2:

We will use quantitative metrics to inform and support, but not to supplant peer review and expert judgement (based on Leiden Principle 1, and Metric Tide recommendation 1).

Peer review remains the method of choice for the assessment of research quality at Portsmouth. We recognise that peer review and expert judgement can also suffer from biases, and we accept that quantitative metrics can help to counter such biases. However, their use should be to supplement, not supplant. We pledge we will never ‘cede decision-making to the numbers alone’ nor allow ‘indicators to substitute for informed judgement.’

Principle 3:

Our research assessment and evaluation processes will have clear, strategic objectives (based on Dora recommendation 1, Metric Tide recommendation 2 and 4).

Where research metrics are employed in the pursuit of such objectives (in, for example; taking hiring and promotion decisions, appointing staff to particular posts, or assigning workload hours) the rationale for their use will be clearly stated in our guidance and application documents.

Principle 4:

We will account for variation by disciplinary field in terms of research outputs and citation practices (based on Leiden Principle 6, Dora recommendation 2).

We recognise that certain types of metrics have limited relevance for research quality judgments in certain disciplines (e.g.: citation data is not so reliable in the humanities and arts fields as in science and engineering), and that journal impact factors can vary significantly by field. Therefore, where we use research metrics for evaluative purposes, the metrics selected and applied will be those that best reflect that disciplinary field (whether it be in terms of the type of output and/or impact produced, citation counts, [external] funding practices, levels of collaboration and supervision expected, likely career paths, etc.). Where metrics are used for the purpose of comparative evaluation across disciplines, the rationale for the methodology employed in the evaluation will be made clear to the individuals/groups affected.

Principle 5:

We will ensure data sources are accurate, reliable, robust and transparent (based on Leiden Principles 5, 9 and 10).

Where metrics are used, we will ensure the source of the data is identified and accessible to those to whom it is applied. We will include mechanisms allowing those accessing the data to identify where they feel the data to be invalid/incorrect. We will also regularly monitor the metrics used to ensure their use is not inducing perverse behaviour (ie: 'gaming') into the assessment and evaluation process.

Principle 6:

Where we use research metrics in our assessment and evaluation processes, we will not rely upon one single metric in isolation (based on Leiden Principles 7 and 8).

Our assessment and evaluation practices will use multiple indicators to provide a 'more robust and pluralistic picture.' One metric may provide useful insights into one facet of a research profile, but is unlikely to reflect the full breadth of individual endeavour and so its use will be combined with a suite of other quantitative metrics, along with additional qualitative information, in making research-related judgements and taking research-related decisions.

Principle 7:

We will not employ research metrics that reflect or introduce bias (e.g. by gender) in any research assessment or evaluation process.

We will ensure that all assessment and evaluation processes, and any quantitative metric employed therein, are reviewed against equality and diversity principles prior to their implementation. This was strongly embedded in our Code of Practice for REF2021 that stated: "We have embedded equality and diversity as an underlying value in the University Strategy 2015-2020 and in our approach to REF 2021, with inclusion at the heart of all decisions, particularly those around submission of staff. This REF 2021 Code of Practice sits within the framework of the University of Portsmouth's Equality and Diversity Policy Statement, Equality Objectives, Access and Participation Plan, and underlying policies and guidance covering dignity and respect, religion and belief, gender identity and expression, and student parents and carers (Section 1.2, P.5)."

Principle 8:

We will champion the use of responsible metrics at Portsmouth (Metric Tide recommendation 3 and 5).

We believe there should be a shared understanding of the importance of best practice in research evaluation. To this end we will ensure that;

- a. Our institutional web-pages share examples of best practice in research assessment and evaluation
- b. Research administrators and managers champion the use of such practices
- c. Policies reflect such practices
- d. Individual researchers incorporate such practices when they present their own CVs and/or evaluate the work of colleagues.