

Staffordshire University's Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics

Introduction

Research excellence is at the heart of Staffordshire University, central to the vision and strategy of being the Connected and Digital University. Guided by our Research, Innovation and Impact Strategy, Staffordshire University seeks to be a leading UK Modern University for research and its impact.

Enhancing the quality, impact and visibility of Staffordshire University's research is an integral part of this strategic mission. Understanding and monitoring the University's progress against these ambitions is essential to delivering success. Research metrics bring great benefits to the development of the University's research through ensuring we are publishing our research in appropriate outlets, as well as for analysing and understanding the reach and impact of our research in and beyond academia.

However, Staffordshire University recognises that research metrics have limitations, particularly in certain discipline areas and with certain output types. Moreover, we recognise that misinformed or ill-applied use of metrics can be detrimental to an individual and the institution itself. As such, Staffordshire University adopts and advocates a responsible use of research metrics, as outlined in the seven principles below. These principles seek to replicate and build upon those outlined by the [Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics](#).

1. Research metrics will support - not replace - qualitative, expert assessment and peer review

Staffordshire University recognises the value of quantitative metrics (where available and appropriate) to support qualitative, expert peer review. Metrics will only be used to supplement - not replace - expert academic judgement. At Staffordshire University, the content of a research output will always be considered more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it was published.

The University may consult metrics in a variety of processes focusing on individual researchers including recruitment, performance and development review (PDR) and promotion. However, such metrics will not be used to replace or supplant expert peer assessment of research outputs, or due consideration of other aspects of an individual's portfolio (see principle number 4).

At an institution, school, department or research centre level, metrics may be used for collective assessment. However, expert peer assessment will always guide their interpretation and will not be used as a substitute for informed judgement.

2. Performance will be measured against the research missions of the institution, centre or researcher

The University endeavours to deliver research of the highest quality and impact. Metrics around the visibility and citation levels of outputs, research income applications and awards and collaboration levels are helpful in monitoring institutional progress against key performance indicators (KPIs).

Each school, department and research centre will also have aims and targets, and any metrics used to evaluate performance against these will be considered against their particular research mission, taking into account discipline norms (see principle number 3).

Similarly, individual researchers set their own research plans in line with school aspirations through the academic PDR process. Progress against individual targets will be monitored through individual PDRs.

3. Account will be taken for variation by field in publication and citation practices

Publication and citation practices vary widely between disciplines, and such disciplinary differences must be considered when using research metrics. Metrics are more relevant to, and covered more comprehensively in, some disciplines and publication types than others. For instance, journal articles in STEM based disciplines tend to receive considerably more citations than publications in humanities. Similarly, STEM researchers might be expected to publish in considerably greater volume than humanities researchers over the course of their careers. Disciplines where a monograph holds particular prevalence may not be well served by citation databases, while practice-based outputs tend to receive very low levels of coverage.

Research at Staffordshire University covers a broad spectrum of research disciplines; from STEM-focussed, to practice-based art and design. When using research metrics to evaluate the performance and productivity of individuals, departments or research centres, the disciplinary norms for publications and citations will always be given consideration. Only metrics appropriate to the discipline will be used.

Research metrics will be normalized or 'field-weighted' wherever possible and appropriate, to compensate for disciplinary differences, and will be based on percentiles rather than averages where a single outlier can skew the numbers. For practice-based outputs, indicators appropriate to the discipline and publication type will be considered, where available and relevant.

4. Assessment of individual researchers will be based on a qualitative judgement of their whole portfolio

Staffordshire University recognises that academics undertake a wide range of research (and other) activities that further the University's strategy and mission. Not all of these activities can be measured and benchmarked. When assessing the performance of individuals (for example, for promotion), consideration will be given to a wide view of their expertise, experience and influence. Peer review and expert judgement will always be given precedence over quantitative indicators (see principle number 1).

Staffordshire University recognises that length of career, career stage, career breaks, part-time working and protected characteristics may impact upon an individual's research productivity and associated research metrics. Research metrics will always be considered in the wider context of an individual's full portfolio of work and achievements, and any relevant factors such as those of the previous sentence.

5. Individual researchers will be able to verify data held about them

Individual researchers will be informed of the citation databases the University utilises in its analysis of research performance. Researchers should ensure that their own profile is accurate, where possible, correct any errors or omissions. For instance, a researcher may erroneously have two separate profiles due to name variations used when publishing, which could lead to an incorrect

determination of their research metrics. Researchers are encouraged to contact researchservices@staffs.ac.uk for support or queries regarding coverage in external citation databases. The University strongly encourages all researchers to create and use an [ORCID](#) identifier and to link their ORCID to relevant citation databases, where possible.

The accuracy of data in the University's Open Access repository, STORE, is the responsibility of the individual researcher. They should contact store@staffs.ac.uk to rectify any anomalies or inaccuracies. Data held internally on research income applications and awards, PGR supervisions, and other evidence of research activity as recorded on University systems will be made available to individual staff via the PDR process. Academics are therefore able to see the data relating to themselves and to request corrections where necessary.

6. The systemic effects of metrics will be recognised, and the use of research metrics will be regularly reviewed and updated

Any measurements can establish incentives which affect the system they are used to assess. To mitigate any negative impacts, a range of metrics will be used wherever practical. The University will regularly reassess and revise our use of research metrics and consider any unintended consequences and biases of those indicators. The Director of Research will report on their continued appropriateness to the Research and Innovation Committee every two years. The University will also regularly review this Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics to ensure it remains comparable with other standards and declarations across the sector.

7. Ensure those who generate and interpret research metrics, in particular regarding promotion, do so in line with the University's Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics

Guidance on the responsible use of research metrics will be provided by Research, Innovation and Impact Services (RIIS), in collaboration with the library, to staff who generate and interpret research metrics to ensure understanding of, and adherence to, this Statement.

The University's guidance for applications for promotion to professor and associate professor outlines how the Professorial Conferment Committee will make use of relevant research metrics in assessing applications. In accordance with principle 1, such indicators will only be used to supplement peer review and expert opinion.

Staffordshire University encourages staff to promote best practice in the use of research metrics, and to challenge any research assessment practices that contravene the University's responsible use of metrics policy.

February 2020