

Citation Metrics and the ADR Process 2022

This message offers important guidance to ADR reviewers of academic staff in all subject areas and is provided to all academic staff for information.

The University Strategic Plan includes a target (KPI 7) that 20% of the University published research outputs should be in the top 10% most cited publications of the research fields they are published in. This message therefore highlights the relevance of citation strategies within the ADR discussion.

This guidance also seeks to ensure that citation metrics are used appropriately and responsibly in the ADR process, in compliance with the University's commitments as a signatory of [the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) and the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers \(Researcher Development Concordat\)](#).

These commitments include:

- Not using journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles or to assess an individual researcher's contributions.
- Recognising that the scientific content of a paper is more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it was published.
- Considering the value and impact of all research outputs (including datasets and software) in addition to research publications.
- Considering a broad range of impact measures including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice.
- Supporting individual researchers' career development by providing support that is tailored to their career stage and research ambitions, rather than focusing on citation metrics without considering the individual's context.

With these commitments in mind, this guidance advises on when it would be appropriate to use citation metrics and which metrics may be appropriate. It also includes links to important resources on citation metrics which you may wish to utilise.

How can citation metrics and citation strategies be considered in the ADR process?

Whilst citation metrics are not a substitute for peer review in the assessment of research output quality, they can be useful in some circumstances:

- Citations are a strong indicator of the *academic reach* of a publication, and is therefore also an indication of *academic impact*.
- Colleagues can benefit from seeing the response to their work. This can inform personal publication strategies to promote academic engagement with their future research.
- In some disciplines, citation metrics are used as an indicator of academic significance to inform peer review of output quality. For example, in REF 2021, four of the Units of Assessment that the University submitted to made use of citation data (A3 – Allied Health Professions; B8 – Chemistry, B9 – Physics and B11 – Computer Science and Informatics). In these disciplines, it may be appropriate to consider citation metrics when discussing research quality. All other units that the University submitted to did not accept nor make use of citation data.
- Some ranking exercises in the global HE sector take citation metrics into account. For example, 30% of the score assigned to institutions in THE World Rankings is derived from these metrics.

ADR reviewers are therefore asked to make appropriate use of citation metrics where merited, for example, where it may inform discussion of the individual's career progression or strategies for increasing the visibility of their outputs. Discussions should also consider how colleagues can best support the University to achieve KPI 7 through greater efforts to ensure that our publications reach and influence academic colleagues.

It is important to consider during these discussions that different types of outputs can serve different purposes, e.g. review papers can attract high citation numbers and be highly influential in the field but cannot be submitted to the REF; similarly, outputs stemming from KE engagements might not receive high citations (or may even be confidential) but benefit the University's KPI 11 (Industry income).

At all times, ADR reviewers should ensure that any strategies put in place to increase citation metrics are in the interest of the individual's career progression and research ambitions.

Which citation metrics should be used?

Citation metrics should be used responsibly and with consideration of their limitations. Inappropriate metrics can easily paint a picture that does not reflect the circumstances of a colleague under review. The h-index for example, which counts the number of publications meeting a threshold of citations, will not favour colleagues who have had career breaks or illness and have not had the opportunity to publish as many outputs as other colleagues.

A better metric might be a combination of the count of outputs produced by a colleague along with the Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) for those outputs. The FWCI takes account of the differing citation rates across subject areas as well as the outputs' publication years. This pairing of metrics sets an individual's output volume and citation impact against a backdrop of citation rates that should be appropriate to the individual being reviewed. FWCI is the measure used in Vision 2025 to define KPI 7.

In social science and humanities subjects, citation metrics are increasingly available, but coverage is much less complete. For these areas, it makes sense to complement citation measures by looking at alternative measures of 'online attention'.

Where can I obtain these citation metrics?

The RKES portal has a page on Publications, [here](#). It includes:

- instructions for analysing the citation metrics for one or more researchers via SciVal;
- instructions for using Altmetric (a key provider of non-traditional bibliometrics) to discover where our research has been mentioned online;
- practical tips for colleagues wishing to increase citations of their work, including guidance on making research Open Access. Please encourage your reviewees to make use of this guidance.

Who can I contact if I need further assistance or advice?

Enquiries to:

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