Responsible Metrics Policy

1.0 Introduction

"Responsible metrics" refers to the ethical and appropriate use of citation-based metrics (e.g. citation counts, Journal Impact Factor, H-index), altmetrics (e.g. how many times research is mentioned, used, saved and shared on blogs, social media and social bookmarking services) and other quantitative means of evaluating research. This policy seeks to ensure that any use of metrics within the University is done so responsibly and that metrics are not used as a sole measure in any decision-making process. It is acknowledged that metrics are only at indicator of quality and that due consideration must be taken in relation to different types of outputs and disciplines.

1.1 Mission Statement

The University of Northampton is committed to driving excellence in research and has reaffirmed this by signing the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)](). We recognise the increasing role and use of metrics in academia and wider society. We recognise the limitations that metrics have, especially with the complexity of applying them to specific research disciplines whilst also acknowledging that when used correctly they can be a useful tool to guide the review process.

A series of guidelines is set out below to ensure that the University of Northampton uses metrics in a responsible manner. These guidelines are based on the [Metric Tide Report]() and the [Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics](). This builds upon and enhances their principles creating a responsible way of working that works within the University's research environment.

2.0 Guidelines/Principles

2.1. Quantitative evaluation should support qualitative expert assessment, not supplant.

The University recognises the importance of both quantitative and qualitative metrics being used as part of the analysis and assessment of outputs in the research environment but acknowledges that both have significant weaknesses if used in

isolation. These indicators will be used where relevant in each research discipline, in combination with peer review to create a rigorous and fair review process.

2.2 Measure performance against the research mission of the institution, group or researcher

Reviews will take place at the most appropriate level possible, this could be at an institutional, faculty, research centre or individual level to ensure fairness. While acknowledging that indicators such as journal quartile, Citescore and Impact Factor are useful in monitoring research at a strategic level, these will not be used at an individual level to monitor performance.

2.3 Protect excellence in locally relevant research

The Univesity is aware of the potential biases in metrics when publishing in a non-English language publication. It is important that academics publishing in other languages are not penalised. For example, taking care when using impact factor as this is determined by analysing journals indexed in the mostly English based language used by Web of Science.

2.4 Keep data collection and analytical processes open, transparent and simple

The University will ensure that any use of metrics will be transparent with the metrics being reproducible where feasible. There is a balance to be struck between using simple easy to gather and understand metrics and the more complex indicators that are harder to replicate. Any metrics provided will not disadvantage specific researchers or disciplines.

2.5 Allow those evaluated to verify data and analysis

The publication, metric and citation tools that our metrics are extracted from are open to all academics at the University of Northampton. This information is regularly checked and audited by the Research Support Team, however the onus is on the academic as the inputter of data to verify that their profile and outputs contain the most accurate and up to date data available. Training sessions are provided by the Head of Research Support on how to use these tools that are open to all staff to attend across the university.

2.6 Account for variation by field in publication and citation practices

The University acknowledges that research practices can vary widely between disciplines with some outputs and metrics being favoured over others depending on the subject. The University will ensure indicators are normalised (e.g. field weighting) across the faculties, centres and institutes so that where possible the most appropriate indicators are used for each relevant research discipline.

2.7 Base assessment of individual researchers on a qualitative judgement of their portfolio

The University understands that indicators used in isolation do not consider characteristics such as career stage, gender and ethnicity. Therefore, the university is committed to not using these indicators in insolation and will combine them with a peer review process. When considering recruitment, progression or performance management activities considerations will be made using this more thorough and accurate process.

2.8 Avoid misplaced concreteness and false precision

The University commits itself to using multiple indicators to ensure a robust and authentic picture of research is achieved. Any metrics provided will also contain information in relation to how the metrics have been calculated and any known biases associated with these metrics. The University will work against 'false precision' only publishing data to the most relevant data point. For example, we will only use Impact Factor to two decimal places as anything further than that can be discounted as variance.

2.9 Recognise the systematic effects of assessment and indicators

The University recognises that indicators change the system through the incentives that they establish. A single metric or a group of similar metrics can invite gaming and goal displacement. Therefore, the University is committed to using a variety of indicators (publication in top journal percentiles, outputs in top citation percentiles, field-weighted citation impact and collaboration impact) to ensure our responsibility to not take part in any gaming of the metric system.

2.10 Scrutinise indicators and regularly and update them

The University recognises that within the changing social and economic landscape we work in, indicators are constantly evolving and we need to evolve with them. We will review any indicators that we use on a regular basis every 12 months at the Research and Enterprise Committee, revising where appropriate.

3.0 University Responsibilities

- The University is responsible for training all research active staff in the best practice and use of indicators. Training sessions will be facilitated by the Head of Research Support. All staff in research leadership roles will be provided with annual training.

4.0 Individual Responsibilities

- Staff at the University of Northampton are responsible for using metrics in a responsible manner as set out in these guidelines.
- All records of outputs must be accurate and up to date in our CRIS (Current Research Information System; Pure) to the best of their knowledge.

5.0 Policy Approval and Review

This policy was considered at the Research and Enterprise Committee on the 22nd of April 2021. It was approved at the Senate on the 5th May of 2021.

This policy shall be reviewed every 12 months at the Research and Enterprise Committee as part the regular review of progress towards the University of Northampton's pledge towards creating a transparent and open research environment.

6.0 Definitions

Metrics/Indicators	Metrics are quantitative measures designed to help evaluate research outputs. This can include statistics such as citations, h-index or Impact Factor
San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)	It is a worldwide initiative developed in 2012 during the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Cell Biology in San Francisco covering all scholarly disciplines and all key stakeholders including funders, publishers, professional societies, institutions, and researchers. The declaration was developed in 2012.
Leiden Manifesto	10 principles developed to guide research evaluation developed by Hicks, Wouters, Waltman, Rijcke and Rafols. This best practice in metrics-based research assessment allow researchers to hold their evaluators to account.
Metric Tide Report	A report presenting the findings and recommendations of the independent review of the role of metrics in research assessment and management. It explored the use of metrics

	across multiple disciplines and assessed their potential contribution to eh developed of research excellence.
Pure	Pure is the University's Current Research Information System (CRIS) that is used to curate research outputs and activities, provide business information in relation to the REF, Projects, Equipment and also acts as a repository for datasets. Pure is the platform from which academics upload outputs and create relationships between them.

For any responsible metrics information or queries please contact
openaccess@Northampton.ac.uk