



# Policy for the Responsible use of Research Publication Metrics

February 2020

This document sets out the policy for the responsible use of research publication metrics in assessment of research.

February 2020

Reference Number	Version Letter	Executive Sponsor	Officer Responsible for Policy/ Procedures	Consultation Process	Date Impact Assessment Completed	Date of Approval and Committee and/or Executive Officer	Effective Date
v1		PVC Research	Director Information Resources and Research Services, Library Services	Research Committee		Research Committee 12/2/2020	February 2020

# Policy for the Responsible Use of Research Publication Metrics

## Introduction/Context

Research Publication Metrics, often referred to as 'research metrics' and also known as bibliometrics is the measurement of research publications and their citations which are used by institutions, researchers, funders, government and policy makers and in analytic services based on research outputs.

Traditionally the focus has been on academic publications and their citation but more recently has expanded to include additional formats such as research data and software and to altmetrics which measure the communications regarding research outputs for example in traditional and social media. Their use is well established in some disciplines such as medicine and science, although much less so in social sciences and humanities. Where metrics are widely used they are not always understood, are often misinterpreted and may incentivise behaviours in unintended ways, for example a measure of numbers of publications will encourage publication without regard to quality.

## 1. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

### 1.1 Purpose of the Policy

This policy sets the approach to be used when using indicators derived from publication and citation patterns to assess research so as to avoid misrepresentation and misinterpretation.

### 1.2 What is covered by the Policy

The policy takes account of national and international guidance:

- [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) which Aston signed in 2016
- [Leiden Manifesto](#) Published in Nature in April 2015
- [Metric Tide report](#) published by Hefce in July 2015

It applies these principles to provide guidance for Aston University on the use of research publication indicators when assessing either individuals, units of research activity or the institution as a whole.

It is to be used in all situations where these indicators are used

### 1.3 Who is Covered by the Policy

The policy should be used by all those who are generating or interpreting research publication indicators for research assessment. This will include individual researchers, research leaders and research managers. It also applies to university managers who use and interpret research publication indicators to represent or benchmark the University.

## 2. THE POLICY STATEMENT

This Policy is sponsored by PVC Research and maintained and implemented by Library Services (Director for Information Resources and Research Services) and Research and Knowledge Exchange (Director of Research Strategy, Funding and Impact)

- The term 'Indicator' should be used in preference to 'metric';
- Qualitative assessment of research should always include expert peer review, and where appropriate, decision making may also be informed by a range of indicators that are relevant to the discipline;

- Assessment of research outputs should focus on the quality of that output. Individual Schools will develop local policies that set out the 'basket' of quantitative indicators that they will use to inform decision making;
- Indicators should be used with a clear purpose and be carefully selected. Implementation of this policy will be at School level and it is expected that the basket of indicators selected for use in each School will be relevant for the underpinning discipline(s);
- Differences between forms of publication and citation activity in different disciplines should be considered when selecting indicators, as should the coverage of individual disciplines in different citation databases;
- When selecting appropriate indicators care must be taken to ensure that they do not disregard regional variations, local context and scale of research activity;
- Indicators should be robust, be generated from a trustworthy source, for example Scopus, Web of Science or SciVal, and be transparent. Having selected their basket of indicators, Schools must ensure that this information is made available to academics and researchers. Individuals should be able to verify data in respect of their publications;
- The basket of indicators used by each School should be reviewed regularly to take account of functionality of different systems, to ensure that they are providing the breadth of information that is required and that they are not incentivising behaviour in unintended ways.
- Guidance on implementation of this policy, on possible indicators and use of the tools to generate research publication indicators will be provided on the [LibGuide on Measuring Research Impact](#). Those involved in generating and interpreting quantitative indicators are also encouraged to involve colleagues in the Libraries and in RKE in this process.

### **3. APPENDICES**

#### **3.1 Roles and Responsibilities**

The following need to work in accordance with this policy:

- Researchers in relation to using and interpreting indicators that relate to them or their publications.
- Staff engaged in assessment of research
- Staff using and interpreting research publication metrics for promotional or reputational purposes

Staff in Library Services and RKE are responsible for providing supporting information and services.

#### **3.2 Definitions**

Research metrics – in the context of this policy, as for bibliometrics

Bibliometrics – the application of statistical methods to the study of bibliographic information

Altmetrics – measurements of the attention received by research outputs in non-academic media, notably online.

#### **3.3 Related Regulations, Statutes, and Related Policies**

[Aston University Research Integrity Policy](#)

[Aston University Research Integrity Assurance Procedures](#)

Aston University Research Publications Policy

[San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#)

[Leiden Manifesto](#)