

UK Forum for Responsible Research Metrics— revised terms of reference (November 2021)

Background

1. In July 2015, the Independent Review of the Role of Metrics in Research Assessment and Management published its final report, *The Metric Tide*.
2. The report's central observation was that the metrics agenda is growing in importance in the UK and globally, with increased pressure on HEIs, researchers, funders and policymakers to develop effective and appropriate strategies for using metrics in the management and assessment of research. Alongside this, the report found widespread evidence that the description, production and consumption of metrics remains contested and open to misunderstandings, with a wide mixture of positive and negative effects noted. There were legitimate concerns raised over gaming of metrics and a lack of transparent, open and interoperable data infrastructure to support existing and new metrics systems. As a way forward, the report proposed a new agenda for responsible metrics as the basis for developing appropriate and intelligent uses of quantitative indicators in the governance, management and assessment of research.
3. In support of this agenda, the report recommended that the UK research community establish a Forum for Responsible Research Metrics (FfRRM), bringing together research funders, HEIs and their representative bodies, publishers, data providers and others to take forward the recommendations in the report. The Forum for Responsible Research Metrics was established in December 2016.

Terms of reference (updated November 2021)

4. The FfRRM continues to use the relevant recommendations in *The Metric Tide* to inform its work packages, which are framed using the following objectives:
 - a. Advocate, lead, and where appropriate, provide support on developing a positive research culture that facilitates the responsible use of research metrics across all stakeholders in the research system. Stakeholders include (not an exhaustive list) HE leaders, research managers, research funders, metrics providers, publishers, producers of university rankings, and researchers.
 - b. Provide advice to the UK HE Funding Bodies on the use of metrics in the future national research assessment exercises in the UK.
 - c. Provide advice and guidance on improving the data infrastructure that supports research
 - d. Where relevant, provide expertise and advice regarding the use of metrics across the research and knowledge exchange landscape.

- e. Develop strong international links with a range of stakeholders (particularly research performing organisations), raising the profile of the responsible research metrics agenda globally.
5. It is not within the Forum's remit to enforce the responsible use of metrics within the sector. The Forum will not be involved with the decision-making process of individual investigations, instead to deliver on the terms of reference the Forum will need to:
 - a. Gain the support of senior sector leaders and managers, within HEIs and among research funders, to commit to making real and meaningful progress on the responsible metrics agenda across the breadth of the UK research base.
 - b. Work as consensually and consultatively as possible in support of the responsible metrics agenda, drawing together a wide group of stakeholders as appropriate to build support.
 - c. Be connected to, and mindful of, existing work programmes in this area, formalising links to ongoing agendas and adapting its objectives and membership as appropriate.
 - d. Operate openly and transparently, where possible.
6. The objectives of the Forum will be flexible to take account of the fast-changing nature of the metrics landscape and the work being undertaken by others. It is proposed that good links could be maintained with other relevant groups through regular information sharing and common membership. This will help to identify areas of specific relevance to research metrics and the responsible metrics agenda and to provide advice, expertise and other input as appropriate.

Annex A: Working Practices

Membership

7. The Forum is a sector-owned group. Forum Membership represents the following stakeholders: research funders (UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Wellcome, and Scottish Funding Council (SFC)), Academies (Royal Society and British Academy), Research Managers (ARMA), Jisc, UUK, senior leaders in UK-wide research organisations, and research policy and metrics experts.
8. In the majority, specific members of the group are selected by their organisations. Selected individuals should have relevant expertise, experience, support and willingness to serve the group. They should be appointed for a specified term of 3 years which may be extended by the organisation if the member and the organisation agree. Current members' appointment terms will start when the ToR refresh is approved. If suitable, current members can also choose to step down from The Forum. A succession plan should be determined and ideally documented by each represented organisation. Succession plans should cover the approach for replacing individuals (for example, due to leaving the organisation or a change in role/responsibility) or covering periods of absence (for example due to sickness, parental leave or other circumstances). Succession plans should be cognisant of equality, diversity and inclusion. Organisations should also consider the balance of the group when enacting succession plans, to support a diverse Forum membership. Organisations may wish to work with the Chair of The Forum and the secretariat to understand the existing

membership profile. Organisations enacting succession plans should consider the position held at the organisation by the previous member.

9. The process is different for the appointed members representing the Senior Leaders in UK-wide research organisations and research policy and metrics experts.
 - a. One appointment of a Senior Leader from a Scottish HEI will be informed by Universities Scotland. The SFC are responsible for the succession plan of this position.
 - b. One appointment for a Senior Leader from an English HEI should be informed by UUK. Research England, UKRI are responsible for the succession plan of this position.
 - c. Research policy and metrics experts' positions (two appointments in total) are to be determined in consultation with the Chair. Research England, as secretariat to the group, are responsible for the succession plan of these positions.
10. Where a member is being replaced for one of the reasons listed in paragraph 8 above, the secretariat should be informed of the succession plan and the progress of re-appointment. Forum members will be updated as and when membership changes.
11. Members are expected to:
 - a. Attend all Forum meetings unless apologies are submitted to the Chair and secretariat in advance of the meetings.
 - b. Suggest and bring items to the Forum meetings for consideration.
 - c. Lead and/or engage with specific Forum workstreams. This may involve attending sub-group meetings.
 - d. Represent the Forum at events and within their stakeholder communities, advocating the work of the group.
12. Expenses to attend meetings, when held face-to-face, will be covered by UK Research and Innovation on request to the secretariat. The costs of staff time and costs relating to specific work packages should be covered by the represented organisation.
13. Any conflicts of interest must be declared by members of the group at appointment. Where conflicts arise as part of The Forum's agenda, members should inform the secretariat as soon as it is possible.
14. The membership shall co-opt additional expertise into the Forum as required. Where it is felt appropriate additional organisations or stakeholder groups can be invited to join The Forum to facilitate collaboration.

Chair and secretariat

15. UUK are responsible for the appointment of the Forum Chair. The Forum Chair must be a senior leader from the UK HEI sector. The terms of appointment for the chair shall follow the same process as other Forum members (outlined in paragraph 8), with UUK being responsible for developing and delivering any succession plan.

16. The Chair is responsible for steering the Forum, for setting the agenda (in collaboration with the secretariat), and for final sign off on Forum publications and reports.
17. Secretariat support will be provided by Research England, UKRI. The secretariat is responsible for scheduling meetings, taking meeting notes, working with the Chair to set meeting agendas, and in some instances supporting the implementation of workstreams. The terms of appointment for the secretariat shall follow the same process as other Forum members (outlined in paragraph 12), with Research England being responsible for developing and delivering any succession plan.

Meetings

18. The Forum will meet a minimum of twice per calendar year. This will be face-to-face by default and occasional teleconference meetings may be arranged.
19. Individual workstreams as determined by the group may include the formation of sub-groups of the Forum. This may include meetings outside of the twice-annual meetings. Where a workstream meets outside of the Forum meetings, the lead of the work package is expected to report progress to the group. It is strongly encouraged that members of the Forum will contribute to at least one individual workstream.
20. The secretariat will request agenda items from members at least a month in advance of each meeting. Members are encouraged to suggest agenda items, this can include inviting guests to the meetings. The agenda for each meeting will be determined by the Chair, in consultation with the secretariat. The papers will be circulated at least five working days prior to each scheduled meeting and minutes shall be completed as soon as possible after scheduled meetings for the Chair to review. Members will receive minutes and be offered the opportunity to comment.
21. Meeting papers will not be published by default. However, meeting agendas and minutes should be publicly available to ensure the group is operating openly where possible. The Forum may publish reports, advice or other documentation. These outputs should all be publicly available without restriction.

FfRRM web page

22. UUK will host the Forum's web presence. The secretariat is responsible for requesting updates to the content on the website and UUK agrees to deliver on these requests within a three-week period. The web page should act as a document repository for publications, meeting agendas and meeting minutes.
23. Members of the Forum may request changes/updates to the web page via the secretariat. The web text should be reviewed annually by the secretariat with the support of the Chair.

Collaboration

24. The FfRRM agrees to work consensually and consultatively in support of the responsible research metrics agenda, drawing together a wide range of stakeholders to build support. The Forum aims to be connected to, and mindful of, existing work programmes in this area, formalising links and adapting objectives to ensure they are not duplicating other work.

Process for external requests

25. Where the Forum is asked by a stakeholder or stakeholder group to outline the Forum's position on the responsible use of metrics, the request will be considered by the Chair. If deemed appropriate, the Chair will ask a suitable member of the group to support the drafting of the Forum's response. Forum members will be offered the opportunity to comment on the draft response. Members will be asked if they agree that the response can be signed by the Chair on behalf of the group. The Chair and lead author will consider feedback from all members of the Forum before finalising the response. Where issues arise, these must be discussed with the relevant members. The process will be supported by the secretariat. The Forum aim to respond to requests within a reasonable timeframe.

26. Further information can be requested from Duncan Shermer duncan.shermer@re.ukri.org