Statement on Responsible Research Assessment

At Health Sciences University (HSU), a small and specialist institution, we are committed to fostering a fair, transparent, and responsible approach to research assessment that reflects our distinctive disciplinary focus and collaborative research culture. We ensure that the evaluation of research quality and impact recognises diverse contributions across health sciences, applied research, interdisciplinary work, and engagement with our communities. Our policy aligns with the principles outlined by the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), the Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics, and the Metric Tide report. The university became a signatory to CoARA and DORA in 2024, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to responsible, inclusive, and context-sensitive evaluation of research.

In line with the Metric Tide report, we apply principles of robustness (using the best available data); humility (recognising that quantitative evaluation can complement, but does not replace, expert assessment); transparency (keeping the collection of data and its analysis open to scrutiny); diversity (reflecting the breadth of research and researcher career paths); and reflexivity (adapting our use of metrics in response to their observed effects). By embedding these principles into our research culture, we ensure that research quality and impact are evaluated with integrity, fairness and relevance to HSU's unique context.

PRINCIPLES OF RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH ASSESSMENT

1. Intrinsic merit evaluation

At HSU, we assess research outputs and contributions in a way that reflects our specialist focus in health sciences, our collaborative culture and the diverse ways in which our research generates impact. Our approach emphasises intrinsic quality and impact over journal-based metrics such as Journal Impact Factors, recognising that high-quality research can be published in a wide range of venues and that meaningful evaluation considers content, context and contribution rather than prestige alone. This ensures our assessment practices are equitable, rigorous, and tailored to HSU's scale, disciplines and research priorities.

2. Recognition of diverse contributions

We value a broad spectrum of research contributions, including but not limited to:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles and books
- Datasets, software, and patents
- Policy impact and public engagement
- Collaborative and interdisciplinary research
- Contributions to open science and reproducibility

This ensures that all research contributions are acknowledged and appropriately rewarded, reflecting the full diversity of HSU's research environment.

3. Balanced use of quantitative and qualitative indicators

Quantitative metrics can support expert evaluation, but must be interpreted carefully and responsibly., This includes the use of citation-based indicators and an understanding of their limitations. HSU provides guidance and resources to staff to ensure responsible, context-aware interpretation of metrics, recognising disciplinary differences and the limitations of citation-based indicators.

4. Use of AI in research assessment

HSU recognises the potential of AI to support research assessment processes, including the analysis of research outputs and impact. AI tools may assist in these processes, but all outputs are subject to human expert oversight. We commit to transparent and accountable use of AI, ensuring that its application does not compromise fairness, context-sensitivity, or the integrity of assessment. Guidance will be updated regularly to reflect technological developments and emerging best practices.

5. Transparency and accountability

All research assessment criteria and processes are transparent, ensuring researchers understand the standards and expectations applied to them. We provide clear guidance on how assessments are conducted and ensure consistency across the university.

6. Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

We recognise that traditional research assessment approaches can disadvantage underrepresented groups. We commit to ensuring that our processes are fair, inclusive, and free from bias. Where possible, we take proactive steps to mitigate structural inequalities in research evaluation.

7. Continuous review and improvement

Responsible research assessment practices, including the use of emerging technologies such as AI, are continuously evolving. HSU regularly reviews and refines our guidance, policies and processes to ensure they remain fair, relevant, and aligned with the latest standards in responsible research evaluation. This includes engaging with national and international research assessment initiatives and responding to feedback from our research community.

LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

As a small and specialist university, HSU faces unique challenges and opportunities in research assessment. HSU leadership commits to embedding responsible research assessment practices that reflect our scale, disciplinary focus and institutional values.

GUIDANCE AND TRAINING

To support staff and decision-makers, HSU provides training and guidance on responsible research assessment. This ensures a shared understanding of best practice, the responsible use of metrics and appropriate use of AI tools.

INTEGRATION INTO INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES

We will embed responsible research assessment principles into:

- Hiring and promotion policies
- Internal and external research funding applications
- Annual and periodic research performance reviews
- School, Research Centre, and institutional benchmarking

In preparation for the Research Excellence Framework (REF), we are committed to ensuring that our processes align with the principles outlined in our Responsible Research Assessment Statement. This means adopting a fair, transparent, and context-aware approach to evaluating research quality, ensuring that both qualitative and quantitative indicators are used responsibly. We provide clear guidance to staff involved in REF submissions, avoid undue reliance on journal metrics, and recognise diverse research contributions. Regular reviews are conducted to ensure our REF-related practices remain consistent with our broader commitment to responsible assessment.

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The CoARA Working Group, on behalf of the Research & Innovation Committee, oversees the implementation and review of this policy and conducts annual reviews of research assessment practices. Reports are shared with the university community, and feedback mechanisms are in place to ensure continual improvement.

COMMITMENT TO COLLABORATION AND SECTOR LEADERSHIP

HSU is committed to working with national and international partners to promote best practices in responsible research assessment. We engage with organisations such as UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), CoARA, and other universities to share knowledge and contribute to improvements in research evaluation.

GOOD PRACTICE

- Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment: https://www.coara.org/agreement/the-agreement-full-text/
- San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA): https://sfdora.org/read/
- Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics (2015): https://www.leidenmanifesto.org/
- UK Research Integrity Office Embracing AI with Integrity: https://ukrio.org/ukrio-resources/embracing-ai-with-integrity/
- REF AI Report (2025): https://chet.bristol.ac.uk/research/ref-ai-project/