Universities Accord
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Submission to the Interim Report of the Universities Accord Panel

We support the introduction of an unobtrusive yet comprehensive automated metrics-based system for assessing research quality. The current peer-review approach to quality assessment is incredibly labour-intensive and shifting to a light-touch metrics approach would free countless hours of researchers time to focus on their core roles of research and teaching. Moreover, as the process is more efficient and cost-effective, more frequent updates, on an annual basis, could provide a more timely view of Australia's research quality, especially in rapidly evolving domains.

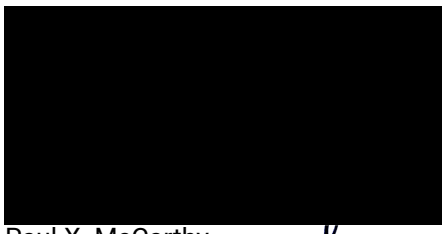
Metrics related to peer-reviewed publishing, such as the volume and impact of publications, offer a new objective perspective on the quality, novelty, and relevance of research across all fields.

The effectiveness of this approach has been proven by leading bibliometric scholars worldwide who have accurately replicated outcomes of a similar extensive national peer review process in the UK (REF) using metrics and existing software and data sources[1]. However, metrics are not a panacea for research quality assessment and must be used carefully to prevent distortion and to avoid the pitfalls of peer-review. And there are many techniques to ensure biases are minimised. For instance, potential biases arising from comparing different research types with distinct publication cadences, formats, and citation patterns can be mitigated by focusing on institutions, groups, or authors within the same discipline or field.

Considering impacts beyond academia, such as education, training, public policy, and industry applications, is also worth deliberation. When implemented judiciously, metrics-based assessment provides an independent view of research quality, especially in global research venues not influenced directly by established Australian researchers. This pathway to a less-biased and fairer assessment of research quality aligns with the Accord's broader objective of equitable access and greater inclusion in the higher education system.

We acknowledge the substantial benefits of employing research metrics and algorithms to assess the quality and future potential of Australian research. It is also crucial that a metrics framework be designed with careful consideration of their limitations and strengths.

Yours Sincerely,



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[1] The world's leading bibliometrics scholar, Professor Anne-Wil Harzing was able to create a citation-based ranking of British universities that correlated with the REF power ranking at 0.97

About League of Scholars

For the past seven years, League of Scholars has been harnessing the power of data science to gauge research impact, evaluate research quality, and foresee potential among scholars on a global scale, with a special focus on the Australian landscape. Collaborating closely with universities, we've been instrumental in devising novel methodologies to proactively spot and attract research talent.

Our collaborations extend to publishers such as Nature Research, where we aid in recognizing the accomplishments of foremost researchers spanning diverse domains and global regions. In another partnership with *The Australian*, we work on RESEARCH Magazine, an annual guide to research excellence in Australia where we employ an array of metrics to unveil Australia's research frontrunners in 250 fields, both at the individual and institutional level.

Additionally, our efforts extend to spotlighting emerging stars—early career academics who have come under our radar through various data signals that illuminate recent achievements while also foreshadowing future triumphs.