

Metrics, merit & maximising impact: where next for responsible research assessment?

Speaker;

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Date & Time: 15:00-16:30, Friday, October 11, 2024
Doors open at 14:30

Venue: : 5th Floor, Lecture Room M, GRIPS and Online
<http://www.grips.ac.jp/en/about/access/>

Language: English

Registration: <https://forms.gle/wd2ggq6HC5wd8Nz89>

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Abstract;

There is now a growing sophistication in the range of methods being deployed in research assessment processes, and the purposes to which such processes are directed. In countries with some form of national performance-based research assessment, there has typically been a broadening of scope in recent years, from an initial emphasis on productivity, towards a sharper focus on research quality, and then to wider economic and social impacts.

Further moves are underway towards the use of assessment as an accelerant of positive change in research cultures – sometimes described as a shift from “summative” to “formative” modes of assessment. This is accompanied by renewed efforts to limit the bureaucracy and burden of evaluation processes.

The most significant recent initiative in this area is the launch in 2022 of CoARA ([Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment](#)), which now has over 800 organisational signatories. CoARA builds on a decade or more of efforts in this area. In 2023, [DORA \(The Declaration on Research Assessment\)](#) marked its 10th anniversary. At a national level, we’ve seen a sharper focus on these agendas in light of reforms to assessment frameworks in [Australia](#), [Norway](#), [Czech Republic](#), [Italy](#), [New Zealand](#), [Sweden](#) and [the UK](#). In China, there has been a fresh drive [to break the influence of the “four-onlys”](#) (*sī wéi* or *思维* in Mandarin) — shorthand for a reliance on “only papers, only titles, only education background, and only awards”. And similar debates are gathering momentum here in Japan.

So research assessment is changing, but many would argue still not fast enough. In this talk, James Wilsdon will review the progress of moves towards **responsible research assessment (RRA)**. This goes beyond debates over metrics and measurement to encompass questions about the changing nature of research excellence; about how to foster a vibrant and healthy research culture; about how to promote research integrity; and about how to embed principles of diversity and inclusion. At the same time, there is a need to underpin values-based arguments for RRA with robust evidence and debate as to which types of interventions are most effective, or may have unintended consequences.



Biography;

JAMES WILSDON is a transdisciplinary metascientist who works on the governance of science and research, and the relationship between evidence and decision-making. In 2023, James joined University College London (UCL) as Professor of Research Policy. From UCL, he directs the [Research on Research Institute \(RoRI\)](#), which he co-founded in 2019 with a mission to accelerate transformative research on research systems, cultures and decision-making. RoRI's consortium now includes research funders from 15 countries, who between them invest over US\$25 billion a year in R&D.

Since the late-1990s, James has worked at the heart of science and research policy in the UK, Europe and internationally. In addition to academic posts at the universities of Sheffield, Sussex and Lancaster, he has worked in think tanks, NGOs and as Director of Science Policy and International Affairs for the Royal Society, the UK's national academy of sciences.

As a researcher, writer and policy adviser, he has advanced concepts such as [upstream public engagement](#), [science diplomacy](#), responsible metrics and [responsible research assessment](#). James co-founded the [International Network for Governmental Science Advice \(INGSA\)](#), and until 2021, served as its inaugural vice-chair. He also chaired the UK's Campaign for Social Science until 2018, and in 2014-15 chaired an independent review of research metrics, published as [The Metric Tide](#)—recently revisited in [Harnessing the Metric Tide](#). In 2015, he was elected a Fellow of the UK's Academy of Social Sciences, and in 2022, of the International Science Council).