



Senate

<b>Paper Title</b>	<b>Signing DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment). For agreement by SET and ratified at Senate.</b>
<b>Outcome requested</b>	Approval of Senate to a) signing up to DORA and b) the public facing statement and the commitments contained therein (Annex A)
<b>Points for Senate members to note and further information</b>	Becoming a signatory to DORA was agreed by SET on January 21 <sup>st</sup> 2020 following a process to identify that we had mechanisms in place to demonstrate our compliance. The public statement was approved by SET on February 11 <sup>th</sup> 2020. The authority to sign comes from both SET and Senate agreement.
<b>Questions for Senate to consider</b>	Is it content to a) signing up to DORA and b) the public facing statement and the commitments contained therein
<b>Regulatory/statutory reference points</b>	Many funders have signed up to DORA and the principles contained therein. The REF 2021 exercise will need a clear position from QMUL.
<b>Strategy and risk</b>	There is an active discussion around whether funders should continue to fund organisations that are not signatories to DORA, this is most advanced within the Wellcome Trust which is seeking to understand organisational positions by January 2021. The discussions have been ongoing for a number of years now, so there is no immediate risk. As important to the views of funders, are our own strategic intentions on inclusivity and creating a conducive environment for research speaks to signing up to statements and practices encouraged by DORA.
<b>Reporting/consideration route for the paper</b>	It has been to SET, the VP of Research and Innovation has confirmed they are content to provide assurance as a signatory.
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<b>Sponsor</b>	Andrew Livingston, VP R&I

## Background

There is growing external pressure to ensure that research-based metrics are utilised in a responsible manner by HEIs. The UK Forum for Responsible Research Metrics (FFRRM) has been providing advice to the UK HE Funding Bodies and the REF panels on the REF 2021. A report from a working group set up to provide this advice was published on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018 – see [this link](#).

This report includes advice on evidencing a good research culture in the REF Environment statement. Paragraph 29 covers the use of research metrics with signing of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) statement given as the example indication, as well as a policy on the use of research metrics for research assessment within the university.

Furthermore, the [Wellcome Trust are mandating institutions to “sign or publicly commit to DORA or an equivalent” from January 2021](#) as part of their Open Access policy. This is a new requirement to encourage organisations to consider the intrinsic merit of the work when making promotion and tenure decisions, not just the title of the journal or publisher.

The DORA declaration has been signed by all major research funders in the UK (including the seven research councils, Wellcome, Royal Society, HEFCE (Research England), CRUK and the British Academy), and by 15 members of the Russell Group so far (including Imperial, Oxford, Cambridge, King’s, UCL, Imperial, Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh & Bristol), and over 1200 organisations overall.

A paper recommending becoming a signatory to the DORA principles was considered by SET in December 2017; it was decided at that time not to sign this. **In view of the above information it is suggested that this decision be revisited.**

**Work has been done over 2019 that has gained the agreement of SET to become a signatory to DORA and to make a clear and public statement on our intent to deliver on the principles outlined. This SET approved statement is at Annex A, and Senate colleagues are asked to confirm they are also content with the statement and becoming a DORA signatory.**

### **Annex A – Suggested public statement related to QMUL becoming a signatory of DORA**

#### **RESPONSIBLE METRICS**

Queen Mary University of London has signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) on the recommendation of the University Executive Board and Senate.

The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment ([DORA](#)) is a worldwide initiative aimed at improving the ways in which outputs of scholarly research are evaluated. DORA is a declaration which seeks to gain commitment among funding agencies, higher education institutions and journal publishing organisations to adopt the responsible use of metrics when measuring the evaluating research. In particular, the declaration seeks to eliminate the use of journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, in funding, appointment and promotion considerations. Instead it encourages assessment of research on its own merits rather than on the basis of the journal in which it is published.

DORA includes recommendations for researchers, funding agencies, institutions, publishers, organisations that supply and use metrics.

**Recommendations for research institutions are to:**

1. Be explicit about the criteria used to reach hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions, clearly highlighting, especially for early-stage investigators, that the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it was published
2. For the purposes of research assessment, consider the value and impact of all research outputs (including datasets and software) in addition to research publications, and consider a broad range of impact measures including qualitative measures

**Recommendations for researchers are to:**

1. When involved in committees making decisions about funding, hiring, tenure, or promotion, make assessments based on scientific content rather than publication metrics alone
2. Wherever appropriate, cite primary literature in which observations are first reported rather than reviews in order to give credit where credit is due
3. Use a range of article metrics and indicators on personal/supporting statements, as evidence of the impact of individual published articles and other research outputs
4. Challenge research assessment practices that rely inappropriately on Journal Impact Factors and promote and teach best practice that focuses on the value and influence of specific research outputs

The recommendations included in DORA are also complemented by other initiatives such as the [Leiden Manifesto](#) (2015) and the establishment of the [Forum for Responsible Research Metrics](#) in the UK. Both of these initiatives advocate for a qualitative expert assessment and greater transparency in the use of metrics and introduce the notion of responsible metrics as a way of framing appropriate uses of quantitative indicators in the governance, management and assessment of research. Taking these developments forward, Queen Mary University of London has become signatory to DORA and has developed a series of institutional principles on the use of research metrics.

**PRINCIPLES ON THE USE OF RESEARCH METRICS AT QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

**1. Quantitative evaluation should support qualitative, expert assessment**

The expert judgement and narrative context provided by peer review is a well-embedded part of the research process. Quantitative indicators, however, can be useful to challenge preconceptions and inform overall decision-making. While recognising that the balance between both approaches will vary by discipline, any adoption of quantitative indicators should be conducted in tandem with qualitative approaches in order to provide supporting information and help build a strong evidence base when assessing research quality.

**2. Use a combination of indicators**

When adopting quantitative assessment, it is important that any approach seeks a variety of perspectives by adopting a suite or basket of indicators.

### **3. Research evaluation should have clear objectives**

There should always be clear reasons for the incorporation of quantitative indicators in any research assessment and this approach should align with relevant School and Faculty strategies.

### **4. Differences between research disciplines should be acknowledged**

Research practices across disciplines can vary widely with some indicators serving some disciplines better than others. The degree of availability of bibliometric data should not drive decision-making about research activities and priorities, either individually or collectively.

### **5. Data sources should be robust, accurate and open for verification**

Source data should be made available where possible. Those subject to evaluation should be given details of how the information was sourced and analysed, as well as being offered guidance how to request corrections (where necessary) and how to access and verify the data. Any limitations inherent in data sources or any potential factors that could bias interpretation of data must be explicitly acknowledged.

### **6. Research indicators and data sources should be regularly reviewed and updated**

The systems of evaluation should be sensitive to the evolving needs of the institution and responsive to the changing nature of the research landscape. As the institutional understanding of quantitative indicators increases, the institution should seek to explore, review and enhance the measures used, provided the sources are robust, reliable, accurate and transparent.

### **7. A rounded and comprehensive assessment of research should be used**

Performance against some indicators can be heavily influenced by career stage, gender and discipline, and any research assessment exercise should take these factors into account. Queen Mary University of London recognises that academic staff undertake a wide range of research communication activities, not all of which can be easily measured or benchmarked. When assessing research performance, it is important to provide as rounded and wide-ranging a picture as possible by capturing a comprehensive view of expertise, experience, outputs, activities, impact and influence.

For further information, please contact [VP Research and Innovation at [vp-res@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:vp-res@qmul.ac.uk)]