

August 2008



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Dear REF Pilot Institution

Use of personal data for the REF Bibliometrics Pilot

As part of the bibliometrics pilot, HEFCE has requested data from the pilot institutions about their research staff. HEFCE hereby confirms that the personal information disclosed by [the institution] and all other pilot institutions will only be used for the purpose outlined below and not for any other purposes.

HEFCE and its appointed contractors will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and in particular with the 7th Data Protection Principle. When we transmit the data to our contractors, it will be done so securely and held jointly on a secure, ISO compliant, server. Data supplied for the purposes of the bibliometric pilot will not be held on any server solely in the possession of the contractors. The contractors are also bound by the Data Protection Act and by their contractual agreement with us, which provides for the secure handling of data. We will not release information to any other third parties unless future circumstances require us to commission research that cannot be carried out by our current contractors. We would ensure that contractors undertaking any such work would be bound by similar agreements

The purpose of the Council and the Contractor processing the data shall be in order to inform the development of a robust and workable system for producing and using bibliometric indicators as part of the Research Excellence Framework (REF). In particular, the purpose will be to:

- Test processes for compiling data about research staff and outputs, to identify the future data collection implications for the Council and institutions in implementing a bibliometrics process as part of the REF
- Test a range of methods for producing citation indicators, and evaluate their robustness and usability in different disciplines

- Assess the completeness and robustness of the available sources of citation data in different disciplines
- Enable the Council to assess the equal opportunities implications of using citation indicators in the REF
- Conduct analyses and seek expert advice on other issues relevant to the development and implementation of bibliometric indicators as part of the REF
- Identify requirements for any further technical work to fully develop a system for using bibliometric indicators in the REF.

We do not expect to routinely share data with the other UK HE funding councils, however HEFCE is conducting the pilot on behalf of all the funding councils and because we are jointly sponsoring this work, we must retain the option to pass information to them. In practice, if data is sent to them this is likely to be only for those institutions which those Councils fund.

The outcomes of the pilot will be published in summary form and anonymised so that individual researchers cannot be identified. The exact details of this approach will be decided in consultation with the pilot institutions well in advance of publication. The data will of course be subject to FOI requests; however we have received legal advice that citation data linked to individual researchers will not be released in response to such requests as this would breach data protection principles.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Rosenberg