

Responsible Research Assessment Working Group



GRC Responsible Research Assessment (RRA) Working Group

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“Responsible research assessment (RRA) refers to approaches to assessment which incentivise, reflect, and reward the plural characteristics of high-quality research, in support of diverse and inclusive research cultures”. (RoRI, 2020)

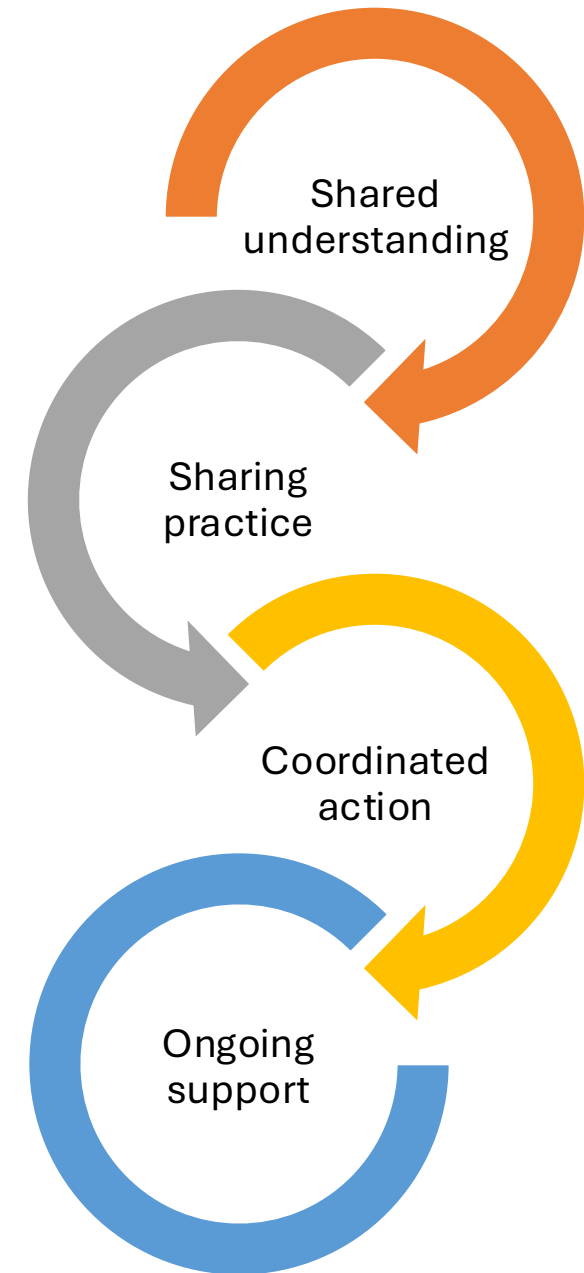
Responsible Research Assessment Working Group

Working Group Vision

Our vision is that GRC participant organisations and the organisations they fund embed approaches to assessment that incentivise and reward the diverse attributes of research excellence in support of a better, healthier research culture that supports rigorous research undertaken to the highest standards.

Our aim is to help position the GRC as a leading voice on the promotion and implementation of RRA in the international research and innovation system to help build a diverse and inclusive research culture.

Through the GRC we will jointly support the adoption of RRA globally by developing a collective understanding of RRA, learning through collaboration, as well as sharing guidance and best practice.



October 2020

Survey of
GRC members



RoRI report

November 2020

GRC RRA
Conference



over 1000
attendees

May 2021

GRC Annual Meeting

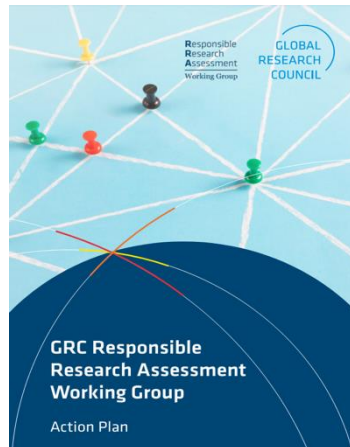


GRC Endorsed
Call to Action

September 2021



Established
GRC RRA
Working Group



RRA Working group
set up (2022)



Action Plan

May 2024

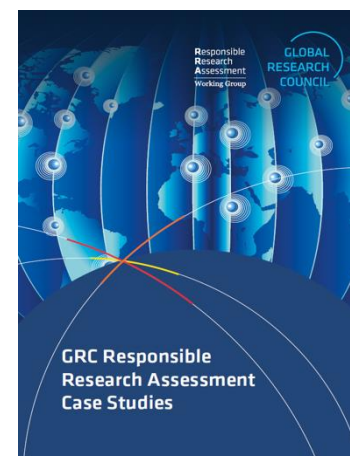


Publish 11 Dimensions
of RRA

May 2024



Launch survey of GRC
participants and case
study template



May 2025



Publish Survey
Report (with RoRI)

May 2025



Publish Case Study
Booklet and launch
Digital library

GRC RRA Case Study Booklet



Case study	Dimensions of RRA										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Americas											
Conicet		X				X		X	X		
NSERC			X				X				
Asia Pacific											
NSFC					X						X
MBIE #1			X						X		
MBIE #2							X				
MBIE #3			X	X							
Europe											
Science Europe		X			X				X		
DFG	X		X			X			X		
HRB					X					X	X
Research Ireland			X				X		X		
FNR	X		X				X	X	X		X
SNFS									X		
UKRI						X	X				
Sub-Saharan Africa											
COSTECH	X		X								
Total	3	2	7	1	3	3	5	2	7	1	3

Table 2: Case studies by region, funding organisation, and Dimensions of RRA represented

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Case study
digital library

Next Steps and Call to Action



Consult the **Dimensions of RRA** (2024), the **Transforming Assessment Report** (2025) and the **Case Study Booklet** (2025) and use them to inform your own research assessment reforms



Keep an eye out on our website for further publications and events, including **Case Study webinars**



Consider submitting a **Case Study on RRA** to our digital library. For more details, connect with us at GRC-RRR@ukri.org



Get engaged with the working group to support the development of a **self-assessment tool on RRA** and supporting roadmap for funders



Contact us if your organisation would like to **join our working group** or if you have any questions: GRC-RRR@ukri.org

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Visit our website:



Transforming assessment

Headline findings of the GRC RRA Survey

Peter Kolarz

DORA Funders discussion group
Q2 2025

The Survey

- **The second GRC survey on responsible research assessment**
 - *First survey ran in 2020*
- Survey open: May 2024 – Jan 2025
- 50 responses, RR = 43% (N=117)
- Strong geographical diversity, incl. 18 from global south (OECD DAC)

RRA – definitions and frameworks

Assessment: Indicators, outputs & criteria

Assessment process modifications

Narrative CVs

The rise of AI

Funders' independence and resources to make changes

Funders' practices (evaluation, etc.)



Headline findings and data highlights

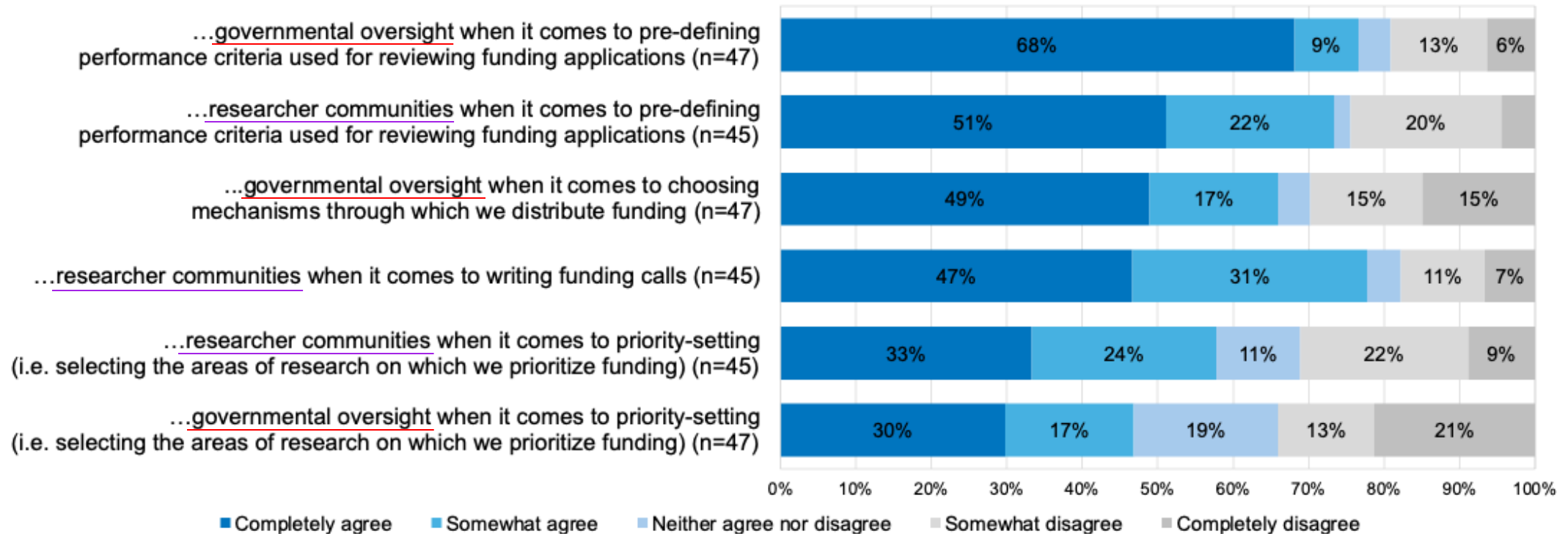
Full report:



Responsible research assessment (RRA) is an umbrella term denoting approaches to assessment which incentivize, reflect, and reward the plural characteristics of high-quality research, in support of diverse and inclusive research cultures.

But first: Funders as change-makers?

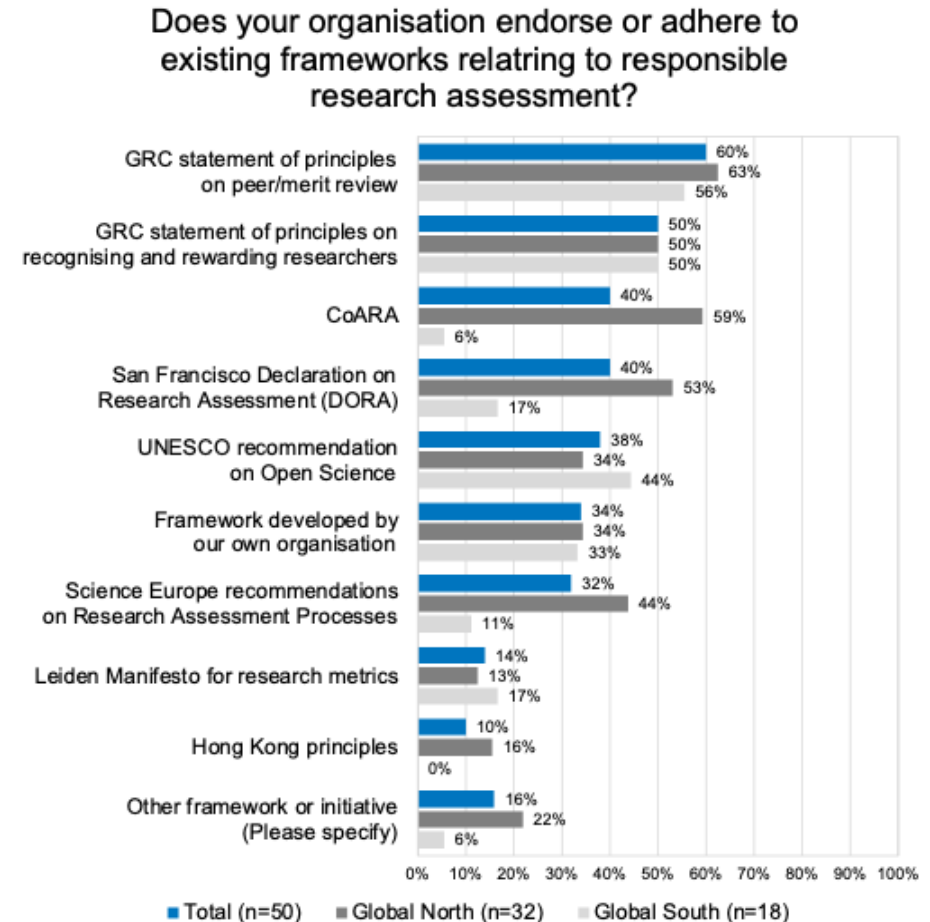
Please select the answer option that best corresponds to the following statement:
My funding organisation has complete autonomy from...



*But resource constraints may present problems!

Research assessment in transition

- **Established markers** of research quality remain dominant and of critical importance in research assessment
- However, additional **markers relating to RRA** are featuring as important second-order considerations
- This is **not a uniform or linear process** but instead takes different shapes in each context
- Our survey results can highlight this **diversity of transformations**, but not yet fully explain it in detail
- The overall trend is **evident at all levels** (outputs, criteria, indicators, process change, definitions/frameworks)



Assessment: the old and the new

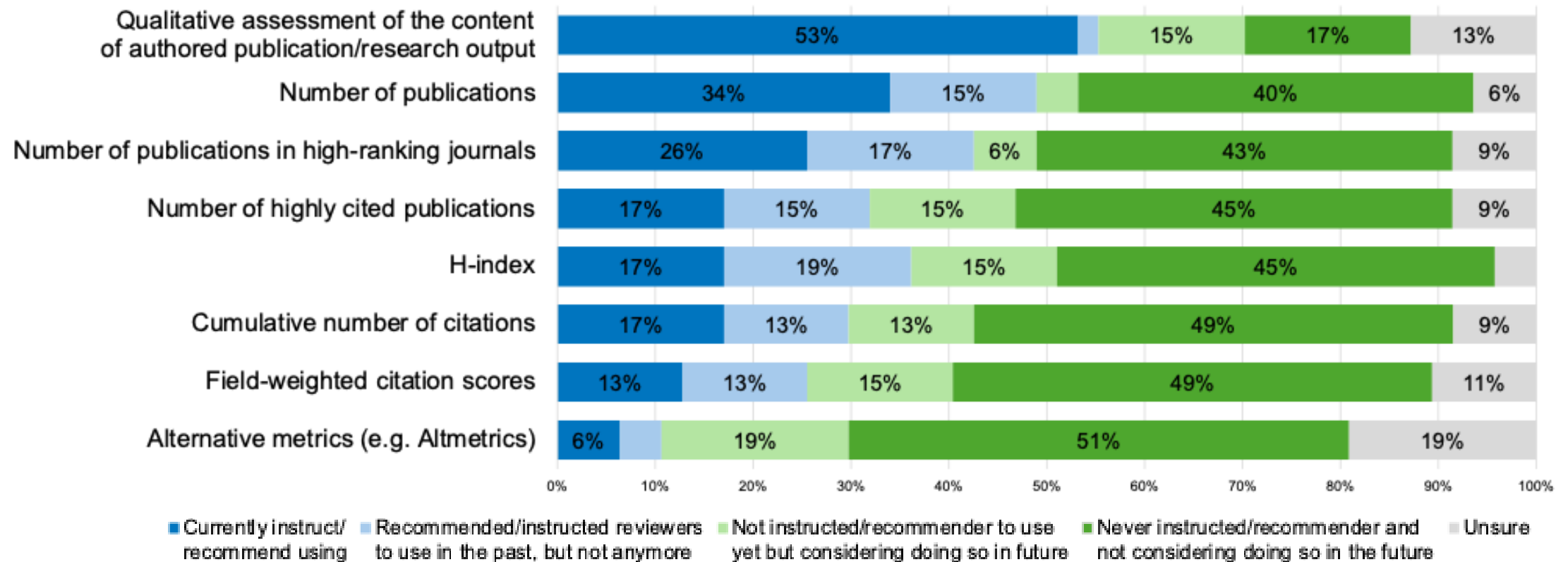
What elements does your organisation instruct/recommend reviewers to consider when assessing research proposals?

(n=47)



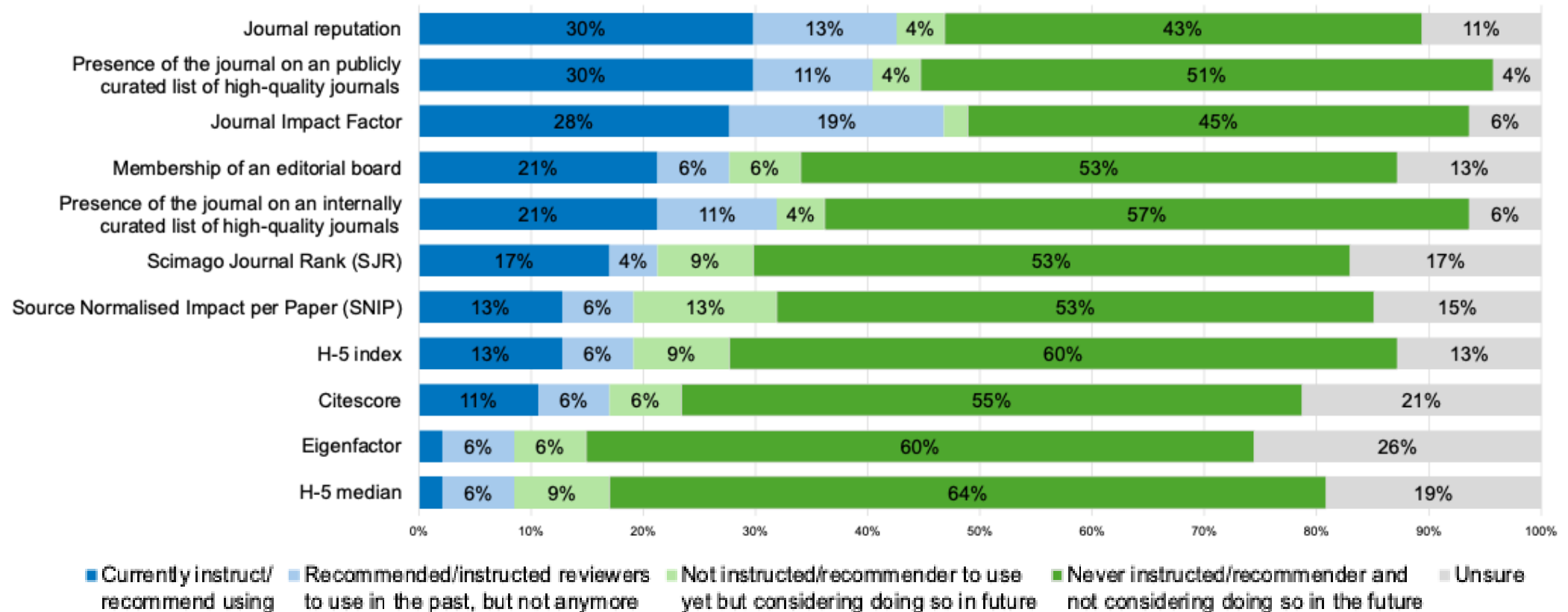
Qual v quant assessment

Please indicate if your organisation instructs/recommends reviewers to use any of the following author-level approaches/tools to measure research productivity and academic impact in the assessment of research proposals. (n=47)

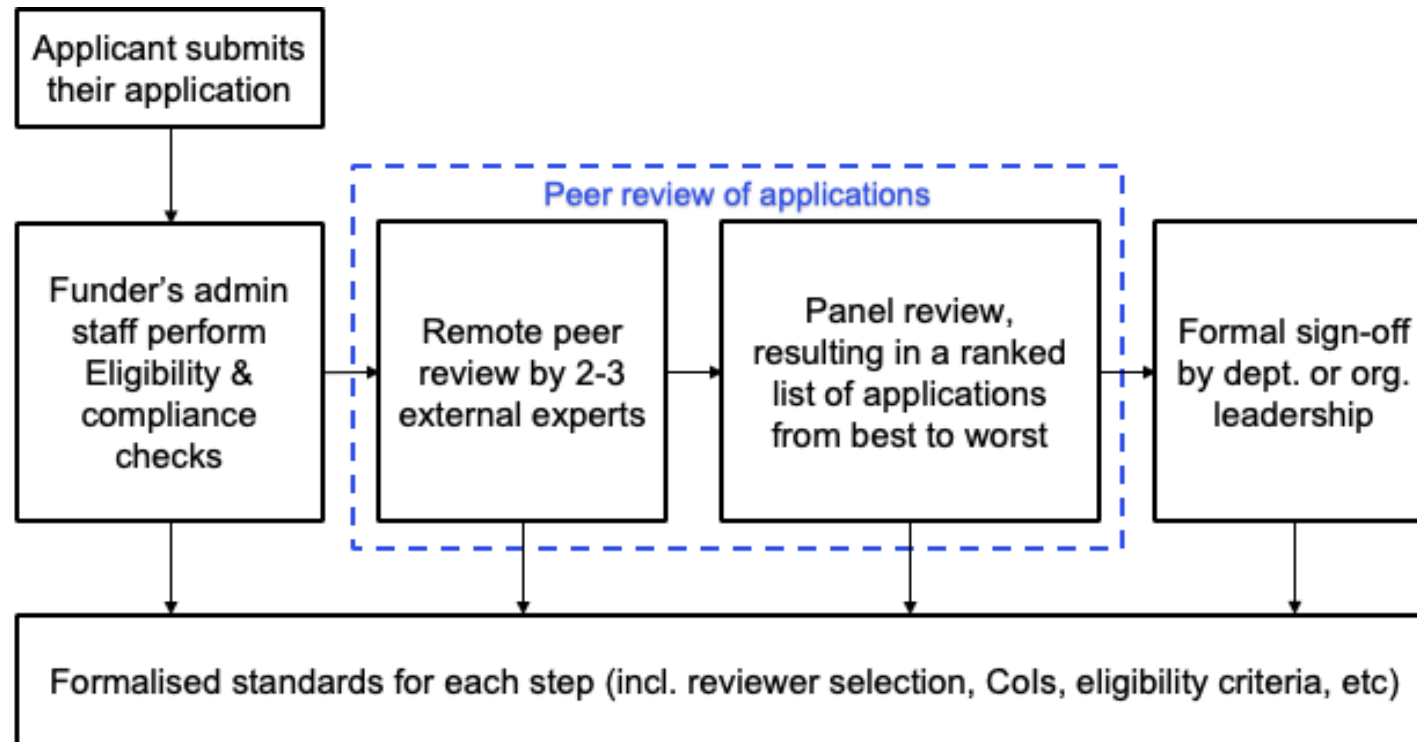


The demise of journal-indicators?

Please indicate whether your organisation instructs/recommends reviewers use any of the following journal-level approaches/tools to measure research excellence in the assessment of research proposals. (n=47)



Assessment process changes



Most common modifications

What peer review interventions does your organisation currently implement in the assessment of research proposals? (n=47)

Use of international assessors	80%	0%	9%	11%
Virtual panel	80%	5%	9%	7%
Group review	78%	7%	2%	2%
Embedding equity, diversity and inclusion in assessment	78%	0%	20%	2%
Assessment criteria definition (ensuring transparency, consistency, clarity, etc.)	77%	2%	6%	15%
Interviews	73%	7%	9%	11%
Expanding or reducing the amount of detail of feedback to unsuccessful applicants	70%	0%	11%	18%
Funder representation on review panels	70%	5%	2%	23%
Scoring mechanisms (formal weightings/calibrations between criteria)	70%	0%	9%	20%
Limiting individuals to one application (as lead investigator) at a time	66%	0%	14%	20%
Two-stage application process	66%	16%	11%	7%

Currently using
Used in the past
Never used but considering
Never used & not considering

Least common modifications

What peer review interventions does your organisation currently implement in the assessment of research proposals? (n=47)

Sandpits or matching events	33%	16%	7%	44%
'Time out' period for unsuccessful applicants (e.g. no re-application for the following year)	30%	2%	15%	52%
Limiting the number of applications (or re-submissions) per institution (e.g. per year, per call, etc)	22%	10%	15%	54%
Use of quotas	21%	14%	19%	47%
Partial randomisation	18%	0%	18%	64%
Programme manager's discretion	17%	5%	0%	79%
Dragon's Den style pitch	14%	5%	9%	73%
'Wildcard': panellists can unilaterally fund one application per year	14%	0%	9%	77%
Applicant anonymization	13%	4%	20%	62%
Peer allocation/distributed peer review	9%	14%	5%	73%

Currently using

Used in the past

Never used but considering

Never used & not considering

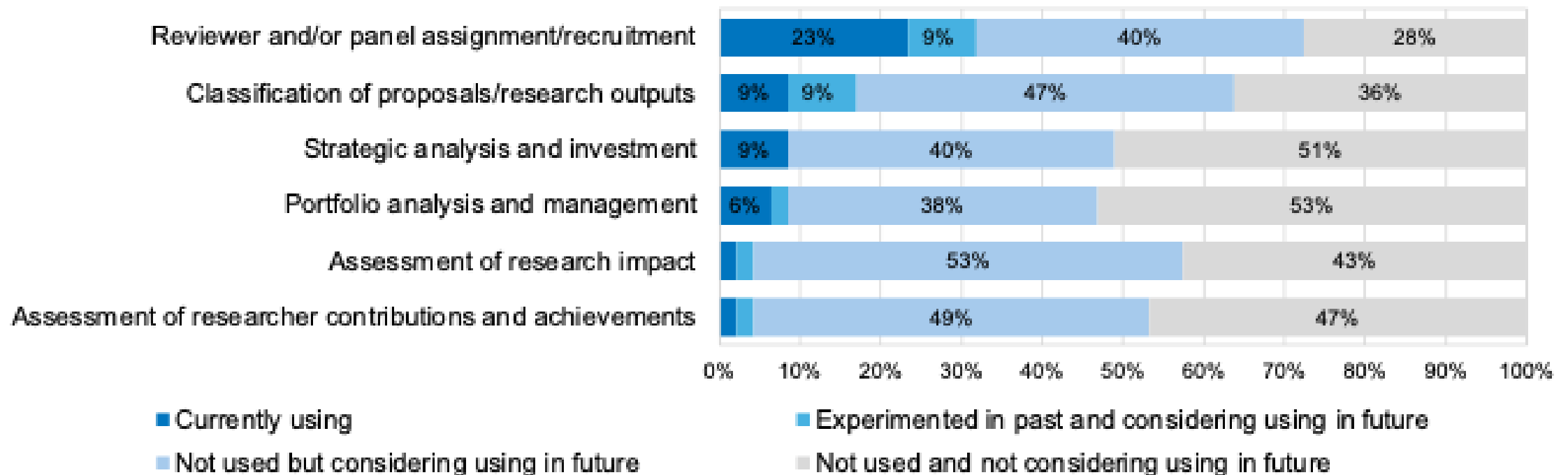
Changing assessment processes

- Considerable appetite for change
- Many interventions relate to RRA
 - *Reducing bureaucracy/burden, increasing transparency, eliminating bias*
- Process changes hold much promise but also entail a degree of risk (will it work?)
- Evidence underpinning the effectiveness of process changes is patchy
- Borne out by our findings on Narrative CVs (popular but effects unclear)
- See also Technopolis 'Review of Peer Review'

Spotlight on AI

What processes in research assessment have you used/are you considering using artificial intelligence (AI) or machine learning (ML) as part of?

(n=47)



AI – further findings

- AI use is neither universal nor uncontroversial
- Funders see both significant benefit and risk from potential use of AI in their work, some still avoid the use of AI entirely
- The greatest benefits of AI are seen for operational decision-making, while AI use for longer-term strategic questions is particularly risky
- Decisions about AI are informed by concerns representing all parts of funding organisations, with a mixture of in-house and external input required
- In short: many perceived risks and benefits, many different voices and viewpoints. Tackling the question of AI use in research assessment is an iterative and evolving process

Recommendations

- **Foster a culture of experimentation** to test, trial and compare a broad range of process innovations
- Results of process experiments, as well as any evaluations should as a rule be **published**
- Engage and **consult with relevant stakeholders to improve buy-in** to reforms/changes
- Funders could **use the findings from this survey and the 11 Dimensions of RRA** to consider their own RRA implementation across guiding principles
- Recognise that **AI has both potential benefits and risks** to research assessment processes, and its implementation is a complex problem
- There is a need for further research to **better understand the different needs, barriers and drivers** of research assessment and assessment reform in different parts of the world
- We recommend that a **survey of this kind should be repeated every 4-5 years** to track progress and developments

Join the conversation

researchonresearch.org

@RoRIInstitute





METASCIENCE

2025 CONFERENCE

Save the Date

June 30 – July 2, 2025
University College London