

General principles for monitoring and evaluating research in Tampere University

Approved by the Academic Board on 20 October 2020

The principal aim of all research activity should be to undertake internationally outstanding work that has significant scientific and/or societal (cultural, economic, social or technological) impact. Research is inherently dynamic, with focus areas and initiatives changing over time. Tampere University research evaluations aim to provide information useful for advancing the high quality and impact of research. Information gained through evaluation is used for setting strategic goals and monitoring progress towards those goals, as well as supporting institutional development and decision-making. The university also has a duty of accountability to external stakeholders.

Research at Tampere University is extremely diverse in terms of disciplines, methods and research cultures. Accordingly, the rationale and form of each research evaluation will be decided on a case-by-case basis. The evaluation system must be reliable and trustworthy. Hence, all research evaluations will be designed and conducted following national and international guidelines on responsible evaluation. In addition, the university has its own principles regarding the evaluation of research. These principles take into consideration the university's strategic aims.

It is critical to ensure that evaluation approaches keep up with the inherently dynamic nature of research and that they are in line with the university's strategy. After each evaluation, the chosen approach will be evaluated regarding how well the evaluation reached its aim of providing information that is useful for institutional development and decision-making, setting of strategic goals, and monitoring progress towards those goals. Evaluation approaches will be developed accordingly.

The evaluation process involves both *monitoring* – collecting appropriate data and reflecting on research activity, and periodic *evaluation* – a more formal process that takes a 'snapshot' of the current state of research.

Monitoring is needed mostly to support faculties, research units and individual researchers in their self-reflection, ongoing decision-making and facilitation of research activity. Monitoring helps make activity visible, and it is best undertaken as a continuous process – this both aids continuous reflection and will also alleviate the burdens of periodic evaluations.

Tampere University is a multidisciplinary university; it is therefore essential that differences in scientific fields are recognized and taken into consideration in evaluation. With regards to monitoring, this means that differences in aims and indicators must be accepted.

This proposal does not consider the evaluation of individual researchers. For evaluating individual researchers, Tampere University will commit to the national guidelines.

1. Evaluations advance high-quality science and research. Evaluations help the University to develop its preconditions for doing research for the betterment of high-quality and impactful science.

2. Evaluation systems must reflect the diversity of different disciplinary needs and approaches. There is no single method or indicator available for Tampere University, so a diversity of methodology and indicators must be allowed. There should be customized aims for units under evaluation (e.g. faculties) and thereby tailored indicators. We should follow the 'one size does not fit all' principle.

3. Evaluation should reflect accountability. The university is in partnership with society, which funds its research. As such, the university should demonstrate that the funds are used to the benefit of society and science. Evaluation should reveal how we interact with wider society and our level of integration. In our research we must also be accountable to the scientific community, and evaluation should reveal the level of our scientific impact and the quality of our research.

4. Focus on all dimensions of scientific productivity. Inputs (resources – such as time or funding) and outputs (tangible results – such as publications) of the research process are more readily quantifiable, and they tell us something about efficiency (that is, the relationship between inputs and outputs). The scientific quality as well as scientific and societal impact of research are harder to measure. In order to gain a comprehensive picture of the target of evaluation, the different dimensions of scientific productivity as well as the relationships between them must be taken into account.

5. Judgement will always be involved. When using quantitative indicators as data inputs it is important to keep in mind that the interpretation of metrics involves judgement. Both qualitative and quantitative information is needed, as well as rigorous and robust systems for reaching fair judgements. Fair judgements require appropriate and transparent processes as well as resources to make sure we are gathering relevant information and using that information responsibly.

6. Evaluation should promote the consideration of impact as an integral part of the research process, rather than only as an act of measurement in the assessment phase. Evaluation of impact involves recognition of a wide variety of research-related activities. Care should be taken to avoid the collection of such data being onerous.

7. Evaluation should also consider the quality of the university's research environment as a site for research work. Evaluation should reveal the quality of the university as an institution in facilitating and promoting research activity. This might include practical support arrangements, the availability of appropriate infrastructure, staffing and staff development/rewards, and general culture.

8. Evaluation should be cost-effective. Evaluation regimes should not place undue burdens and stress on researchers; evaluations should be enabling, not judgmental. The workload of any evaluation should be proportional to the aims and anticipated outcomes of the evaluation. Evaluative processes need to be mindful of the needs for data – how it will be collected, at what cost, and the accuracy and robustness of existing data.