

Statement on BORIS by the Kirby Institute's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

The Kirby Institute's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee acknowledges that the purpose of BORIS is to facilitate interdisciplinary and other collaboration by displaying publicly available information from multiple data sources in one system. Furthermore, the Committee also appreciates the importance of an academic being able to benchmark themselves against their peers which can be beneficial for identifying outcomes to improve on at the individual level, and can be used to support an argument for an academic's application for promotion. In acknowledging that BORIS has limitations, the UNSW Division of Research has made available the research performance metrics system available to all academics to provide them with a view of their research performance at a faculty, school and individual level.

Research performance excellence rests on a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures, however an independent review of the role of metrics in research assessment and management [1] concludes that assessment needs to be undertaken with due regard for research diversity, and that the assessment uses a range of indicators to reflect and support a plurality of research and researcher career paths across the system.

The Committee believes however that there may be a few unintended consequences in the current system that directly impact on research equity, diversity, inclusion and fairness principles, namely –

- BORIS does not reflect research diversity and inadvertently displays a possible gender bias. It does not consider within its algorithm those academics who are not working full-time (often parents or carers), or those who have taken an extended leave of absence from work (parental, carer or medical leave). This is inconsistent with NHMRC procedures, where track records of applicants are considered relative to career disruption and relative to opportunity.
- Given this, those academics who are not 1 FTE or have had career disruption are disadvantaged in the comparative analysis, and inaccurate and discriminatory inferences could be drawn on an individual's productivity against that of their colleagues based on these limitations.
- The fact that the names of staff members are included in the metrics additionally also highlights those at a particular remuneration level, and could negatively impact on performance and job satisfaction.

The Committee make the following recommendations

- a. BORIS metrics takes into account career disruption and relative to opportunity.
- b. When presenting BORIS metrics, an individual can only view his/her own metrics, and any comparisons with others are anonymised.

[1] Wilsdon, J., et al. (2015). The Metric Tide: Report of the Independent Review of the Role of Metrics in Research Assessment and Management. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.1.4929.1363