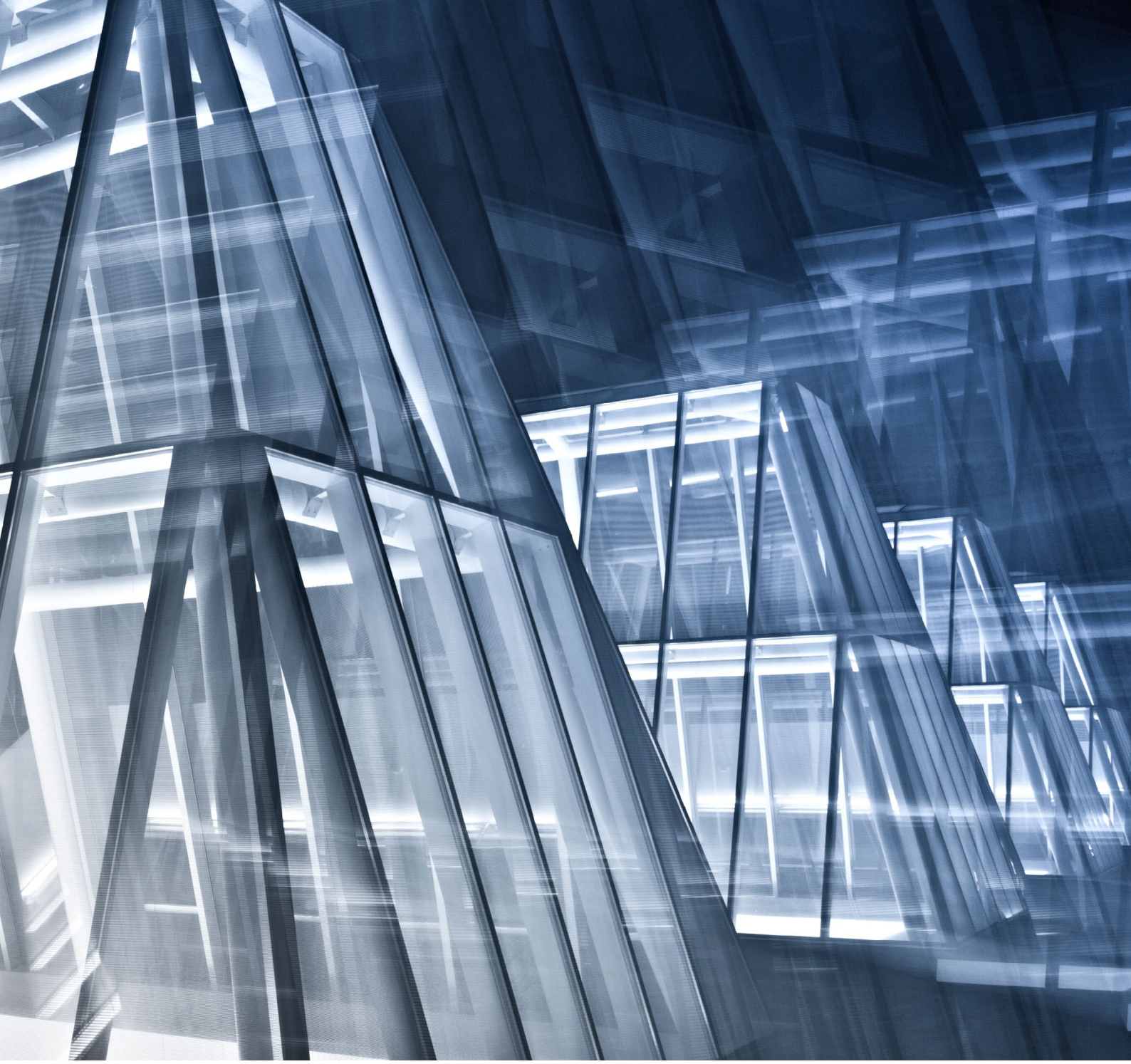

The future of evaluation

Emerging consensus on a more holistic system

ELSEVIER

Introduction

Much is changing in the world of academia. Factors including artificial intelligence, global challenges and geopolitical shifts are reshaping education and research. **Evaluation of academic performance** is one of the areas under scrutiny, with institutions and their researchers under mounting pressure to demonstrate their wider value; for example, their contributions in areas such as open science, societal change and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, calls are growing to reform the current research culture and provide better recognition and incentives, as well as more diverse career paths.

A drumbeat of change has been gathering over the last two decades, exemplified by prominent position statements and initiatives such as the Declaration on Research Assessment,[1] the Leiden Manifesto,[2] the Metric Tide report[3] and most recently the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment.[4] Significant developments in the scope of national research assessment exercises in the UK, Australia and Italy (amongst others) have been informed by such calls for more purposeful and nuanced approaches to research evaluation.

Creating a new evaluation structure that not only meets all these needs, but is equitable, effective and inclusive will depend on the academic community understanding what is changing and how. Importantly, to ensure that any new structure benefits all parties involved, members of the community will need to work together, pooling data, skills, resources and ideas to agree a way forward and create the necessary momentum.

To better understand the thoughts of academic leaders on this topic, we embarked on a listening tour on *The Future of Evaluation*. Over the summer of 2023, we hosted four roundtable conversations held at Times Higher Education events.*

Participants included academic leaders as well as heads of funding bodies.† We welcomed university presidents, rectors, vice-chancellors and provosts, heads of funding bodies, representatives from government ministries and science councils, as well as experts in areas such as policy, university rankings, international collaboration and human resources. Together they represented a diverse range of organizations across the research ecosystem. The 18 countries represented were also diverse: we welcomed 40 attendees from as far afield as Poland, France, Canada, the USA, China, India, Uzbekistan, the United Arab Emirates and Kenya.

During each of these conversations, we shared a high-level evaluation framework we had drafted to spark discussions and elicit opinions. We also asked participants to consider the same three questions:

- How do you view the existing evaluation system?
- How would you like to see it change?
- What is needed to get there?

The roundtables were energetic and engaged. Importantly, they highlighted several themes and interrelated trends — these feature in the global and regional key findings you'll find listed on the following pages. A more detailed (and anonymized) summary of the discussions can be found in Chapters 1–3.

We also used the insights gleaned from our discussions to further develop the high-level evaluation framework — you can view the latest version on pages 14 and 15. In the final chapter, we reflect on potential next steps.

*Roundtables were held at the following Times Higher Education events: Global Sustainable Development Congress in Saudi Arabia, May 2023 | Asia Universities Summit in Hong Kong, June 2023 | LatAm Universities Summit in Mexico, July 2023 | Europe Universities Summit in Poland, July 2023.

† In this report we refer to this group as simply 'academic leaders.'

Key findings

Global insights

1. **Evaluation is a priority:** The subject is of high importance to academic leaders.
2. **A primary focus is institutional-level assessment, including societal impact:** Leaders are interested in evaluation of the university and its teaching, research and societal mission.
3. **There is a strong appetite for change:** The current system, with its emphasis on articles and citations, does not align with desired outcomes. There is wide support for reform towards a system that also addresses education and societal impact.
4. **Striking the right balance between research and education will be key:** This involves acknowledging that research underpins education, especially at research-intensive universities.
5. **A holistic approach is required:** Harmonization at an institutional and international level, as well as portability at the individual level, is critical to the successful development of evaluation:
    - Evaluation of universities shouldn't be viewed as separate from evaluation of academics.
    - Evaluation of universities in a specific country cannot be out of sync with global trends.
6. **Bringing about change won't be easy:** A comprehensive, objective evaluation of societal impact (economic, health, cultural, political and other) is far from straightforward.
7. **A shift in culture is necessary:** A move towards a more interdisciplinary approach, emphasizing aspects such as team science, and diversity and inclusion, is seen as an important ingredient for success.
8. **Qualitative assessment and peer review are critical for evaluation of broader impact:** Any new processes must be trustworthy and scalable.
9. **Quantitative measures of broader impact are needed:** While these are complex and elusive, they are also seen as highly desirable components of a future evaluation model, enabling easy aggregation and comparison of elements such as societal impact.
10. **AI has an important role to play:** Artificial intelligence (AI) will change the way we teach and do research, and it has the potential to enhance future evaluation through addressing challenges around qualitative and quantitative assessment.

Key findings

Regional insights

The Americas

Impact is of high importance: There is a strong focus on tracking impact across all aspects of academic life, from education and health to societal contributions.

Regional impact is a priority: Driving change in local communities is a key focus for many academic leaders, particularly in Latin America.

Education is a major focus: Alongside delivering impactful teaching and learning, participants want to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to education.

Europe

Progress in Europe remains uneven: In terms of experience, Western Europe started earlier and is now ahead. Central Europe is catching up but would benefit from partnerships and mentoring. However, Western Europe is leading in evaluation reform.

Open science is a central theme: It is being widely embraced across Europe. Together with the drive for a more inclusive rewards and recognition system, this is creating a new research culture.

Harmonization is required across the board: Changes in evaluation are required at all levels — individual, institutional, national and international.

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Middle East, Africa and Central Asia

The current playing field is uneven: Evaluation is important to establish a quality threshold, e.g., for accreditation. However, well-funded universities use evaluation to compete and build world-class organizations.

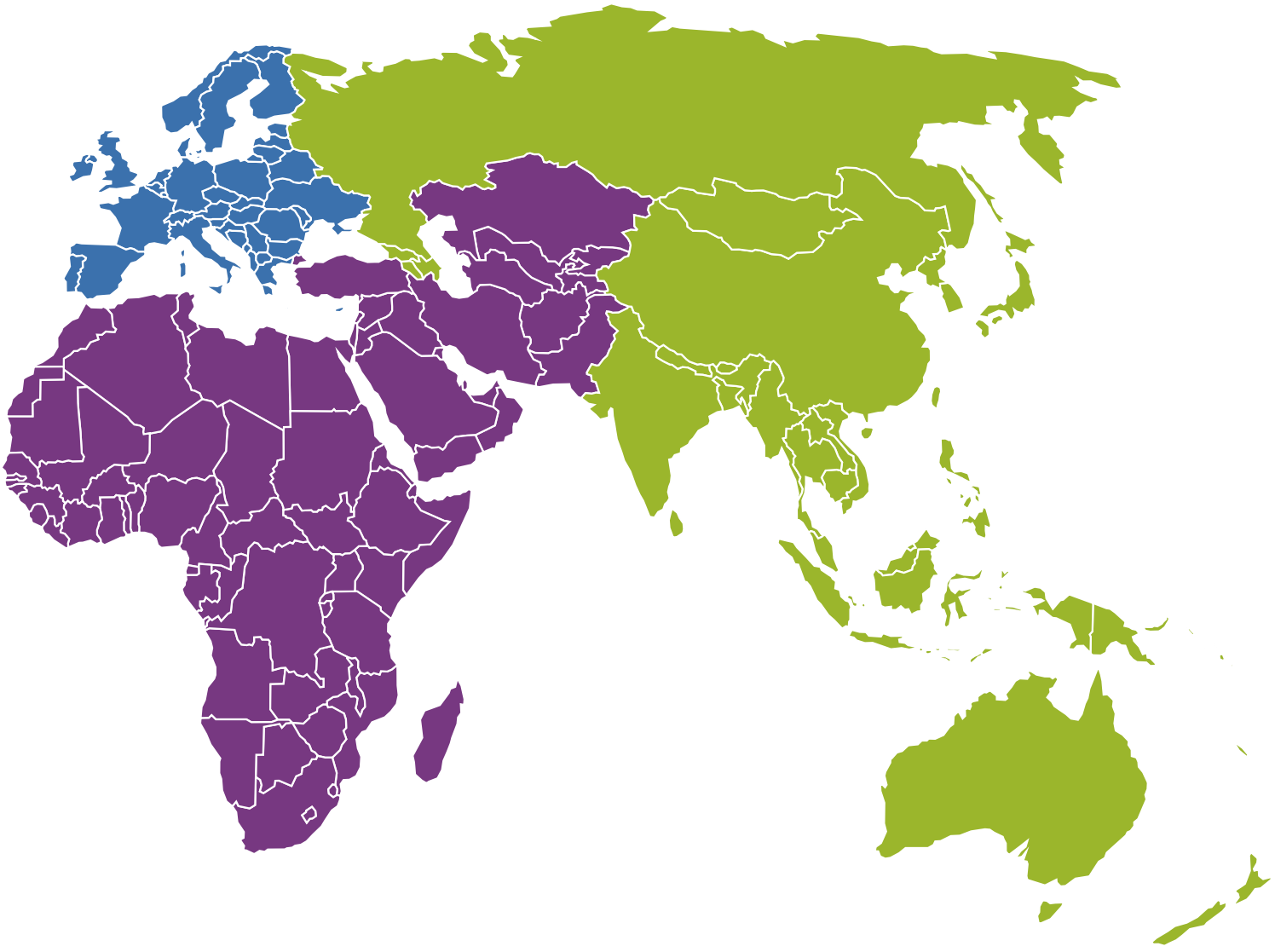
There are regional constraints on activities: Complex dynamics between governments and universities can result in tensions, e.g., academic freedom vs. governmental oversight.

Asia-Pacific and Oceania

There's an urgent need for standardization: Evaluation processes vary per country, impacting opportunities for researchers to have international careers. Harmonization at a global level is crucial.

It is difficult to enact change: While new institutions support progress and tend to be more innovative, many established universities continue to take a more traditional approach.

Diversity and inclusion must improve: Academic leaders want to see more done to advance inclusivity for non-native speakers; for example, greater coverage of non-English journals in abstract and indexing services.



1. Setting the scene

What were academic leaders' views on the existing evaluation system?

The ripple effects of evaluation spread far and wide

There was wide consensus that a major goal of evaluation is to promote a desired behavior and then recognize, showcase and potentially reward it. But academic leaders felt that decisions around what constitutes 'desirable' vary, driven by the strategies of individual institutions, governments and researchers/educators. For example, university rankings can be used to showcase an institution, but they are not always linked to its funding, and evaluation thresholds for accreditation are often designed to ensure minimum standards, rather than drive competition and performance.

Some roundtable participants, particularly those in Europe, believed that when it comes to reaping the rewards of evaluation; e.g., attracting funding, students and talent, the existing system benefits specific countries and institutions over others, and this could have repercussions.

"We should not underestimate the resistance to change from those who currently benefit."

— SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, THE AMERICAS

Whatever the goal or outcome of evaluation, its effects are widespread, impacting institutions, individuals and their careers, as well as strategic decisions on topics such as allocation of resources. As an academic leader from Asia-Pacific and Oceania noted, when people think about evaluation, it's often from the perspective of the evaluator — what process they are using and what they want to achieve. However, when it's a person being evaluated, "they need to be able to tell their story, and an individual can often explain why something is meaningful." That means ensuring that those on the receiving end of evaluations not only have the skills and training to communicate their achievements, but the right avenues to share them.

It's time to look beyond quantitative measures

Nearly all roundtable participants agreed that the current reliance on quantitative metrics as a proxy for excellence is problematic. One university leader pointed to the fact that a high score in a SAT exam — a standardized test commonly used for US college admissions — is not an accurate predictor of student success. Others questioned what constitutes student success: is it high grades and securing a job on graduation? Or is it wider than that; for example, how students contribute to life on campus and beyond?

A reappraisal of the term 'excellence' is taking place across the academic community. This is due, in part, to changing priorities. Societal challenges are now often global in scale and combating them requires the academic community to work in new ways, from collaborating across disciplinary and geographic borders, to openly sharing research results and data. At the same time, a growing number of initiatives are focusing on research that will help us transition to a more sustainable and equitable future. However, efforts in a number of these areas are not effectively captured by the current evaluation system. In fact, many of these efforts are unsuitable for quantitative assessment, resulting in academic leaders posing questions, such as:

- How do you recognize a consultation for a company that produced real changes in sustainability practices?
- What is the impact of producing a report for UNESCO?
- How do you capture thought leadership initiatives that promote progress towards sustainability goals?

Participants wanted to see effective qualitative measures added into the mix.

"We need to go beyond publications and funding, to capture quality, societal impact, the benefit of students to society and economy."

— SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, ASIA-PACIFIC AND OCEANIA

While early frameworks attempting to benchmark societal and economic impact experienced some teething problems, they are evolving. Some academic leaders pointed to the UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF)* as an example: "Early implementation led to some research improvements being made at the expense of teaching, but this has since been rectified." However, they also acknowledged that summarizing performance from highly qualitative information is not going to be easy; for example, finding effective ways to aggregate and compare it.

Capturing the true value of researchers and research

One area that many identified as ripe for change is how we assess the performance of researchers and their contributions. Concerns were raised over current variations in disciplines; for example, some fields favor preprints or conference papers, while others prioritize peer-reviewed research articles. And while citation counts may be considered an adequate proxy for excellence in fundamental sciences, that's not the case in social sciences and applied research. Academic leaders also questioned how contributions can be fairly assessed in areas like the arts and humanities, e.g., the creation of a film or other artwork.

In addition, there was strong consensus that counting the number of an author's publications doesn't accurately reflect the weight of their contribution to each paper. Yet, failing to account for the relative contribution of authors and their affiliations, especially on high-impact papers with many co-authors, can have negative consequences; for example, overinflation of institutional rankings. Participants also questioned how best to recognize the contribution of other stakeholders in the paper, e.g., the lab owner.

Another area of concern was the current system's lack of recognition for open science activities. There is increasing pressure on researchers to publish their research findings open access in some form. In addition, researchers are being urged to share their research data and other outputs related to the research process (e.g., software or code). Many roundtable participants saw it as desirable that researchers also share negative or null findings, to stop other researchers heading down the same unfruitful path. However, despite the extra time these activities require — and the value they add, such as increased reproducibility — researchers currently receive little or no credit for their efforts.

"Issues such as research integrity and reproducibility are critical, but are not incentivized by the current system."

—SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, ASIA-PACIFIC AND OCEANIA

Stakeholders from Asia-Pacific and Oceania questioned the quality and effectiveness of publication peer review: "It's challenging, sometimes not convincing and resource intensive." They also queried how 'peers' are defined: do reviewers always have suitable expertise to evaluate the paper? And how can editors avoid being too narrow — or broad — in their choices?

Striking the right balance between education and research

Many felt that the current evaluation system fails to cater for the breadth of research that institutions conduct, from basic or foundational research and blue skies thinking to projects targeting technological breakthroughs.

The relationship between research and education was a topic that many were keen to discuss. All acknowledged the importance of research, with one noting: "Research excellence is a fundamental strategy for building universities." However, most believed that the current evaluation system has yet to incorporate teaching effectively, particularly the qualitative component. This is despite the role that teaching plays in "building capacity and producing a strong societal impact."

*The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is held every six to seven years and assesses the research performance of UK higher education providers. The REF outcomes are used to determine the distribution of around £2 billion per year of public funding. Institutions can choose how they spend the money they are allocated.

"The problem is an antagonistic view towards teaching vs research... it is as if prioritizing one diminishes the other."

— SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, THE AMERICAS

One suggestion was that the community assign education and research their own, individual sets of inputs, throughputs, outcomes and impact. For example, in the case of education, these might comprise faculty-student ratios (inputs), end of semester assessments and student feedback (outputs), and impact on individuals — career prospects, leadership, societal impact (outcomes and impact).

Determining funding — the pros and cons

There was general agreement that peer review is effective at helping funding bodies evaluate proposals on aspects such as novelty and research capability. However, there were concerns over the unintended consequences of funders' decisions, including their use by some institutions in recruitment, promotion and tenure decisions.

Some countries have introduced performance-based research funding systems (PRFSs) to measure and benchmark the impact of research institutions, including their wider societal impact; for example, the UK's REF. While many roundtable participants saw the value of using indicators to distribute money, they wanted to see the current options adjusted to better align with the academic community's objectives and desired outcomes.

"The REF is currently an efficient way of distributing money and nothing else."

— SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, EUROPE

These concerns may have been addressed, in part, by the new REF 2028 guidelines released in June this year. They state that the existing 'impact' component will be given a new name — 'impact and engagement' — and that universities will now be required to explain the wider contribution of their research activities to society and the economy.[5]

But questions remained over the bibliometrics used in these assessments; for example, some pointed out that they don't currently capture outputs such as teaching or input to policy. They also stressed the dangers of using them in isolation as a proxy for impact.

Closing note

Many of the shortcomings identified by the roundtable attendees chimed with the findings of a recent International Science Council (ISC) report on the future of research evaluation.[6] It called for improvements such as:

- Better inclusivity and recognition of open science
- Reform of peer review
- More thorough bibliometric tools
- Use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches

But until those changes are implemented, the general view of our participants was that 'some data' remain better than 'no data' — providing they are used wisely.

2. Moving away from today's evaluation

What improvements did academic leaders want to see introduced?

There was a strong desire for harmonization and integration of models

Some academic leaders were frustrated with the current evaluation system's lack of alignment at a national or international level — a divergence that looks set to grow as new evaluation approaches are introduced around the globe. One participant in our Asia-Pacific and Oceania roundtable commented: "A faculty member who moves institution or nation is not appraised consistently." This regional fragmentation was also highlighted in the ISC report,[6] which noted that although Europe is moving towards consensus on improving and broadening assessment, North America is still debating options, while APAC is heading down a metrics-driven path.

Academic leaders wanted a system that will harmonize and integrate these differences (where possible) to enable mobility and the portability of assessment. They also believed that a system that compares 'apples with apples' will better showcase their institutional strengths, helping them to attract and retain high-performing lecturers, students and researchers. This is especially important given their agreement that the focus of evaluation is shifting from individuals to institutions.

"Canada cannot afford to go too far out of sync with its large neighbor (the US), otherwise it will lose talent."

— SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, THE AMERICAS

But although leaders desired harmonization, most acknowledged that a new system will need to be flexible enough to account for geographical differences, as well as variations in disciplines: "The differences between social sciences and humanities and hard science are good reasons why a single model will not work for all."

They also noted that in today's global society, policy shifts in one country can have wider implications; for example, policy updates outlined in the UK's REF 2028[5] are likely to influence evaluation in New Zealand.

Most agreed that changes in culture are necessary

There was general consensus that two important qualities as the community moves forward will be openness to change and patience: "This is about policy, but it requires culture change, new ways of thinking, new ways of seeing things that might take a long time to realize."

Many roundtable attendees, particularly those from Asia-Pacific and Oceania, felt that established universities with a traditional mindset and 'old values' will struggle with this shift the most. In their view, newer universities and research institutions are ready to "boldly reform and experiment." This is due, in part, to their leaders, who they viewed as "passionate and committed to innovation in education and research."

"...new institutions can more easily test new evaluation concepts thanks to greater autonomy and flexibility, without the hindrance of a historical burden."

— SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, ASIA-PACIFIC AND OCEANIA

But while academic leaders agreed that cultural shifts are needed, they were less clear on how to make these happen. Some suggested that evaluation could be used to help drive change; for example, incorporating patent tracking as a measure could encourage collaboration with industry.

Conversely, participants wanted to see evaluation develop to reflect the changes that are already underway. As discussed in the previous chapter, although global challenges and shifts in funding priorities are putting growing pressure on universities to embrace new ways of working and thinking, evaluation has failed to keep pace. Many academic leaders wanted to see new measures that recognize existing efforts in areas such as:

- **Research that crosses disciplinary borders**, e.g., interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary projects.
- **Improving inclusivity and diversity** so that there is not only a better gender balance, but equal opportunities for students and researchers from all walks of life.
- **Thought leadership in teaching**, along with creativity in student mentoring and supervision.
- **Collaboration** in all its many forms.
- **Economic impact**; for example, recognition for entities that bridge the gap between research and entrepreneurship.
- **Team science** and the pooling of expertise.
- **Open science**, from the sharing of research data to publishing open access.

Effective indicators for societal impact remain elusive

While the ability to evaluate societal impact is arguably the change that academic leaders most desired, all agreed it will be one of the hardest to deliver.

One proposal was that social impact should be measured via 'logical milestones,' such as peer comparison, poverty reduction, disease prevention and corporations created. Another was that a format similar to the Human development index[7] be adopted to measure average contributions in areas such as health, knowledge and standard of living.

Others suggested that evaluation should incorporate alternative metrics, also known as 'altmetrics', to reflect the broader impact of publications. These metrics look at engagement with a paper; for example, downloads, mentions in the media or social media, as well as citations in policy documents. However, while policy mentions might sound like a reasonable proxy for societal impact, some academic leaders pointed out that they don't capture whether that policy went on to enhance people's lives. They questioned whether it was necessary to introduce a later analysis stage to determine a policy's impact.

"Policy change alone is not a win."

— SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, THE AMERICAS

Those in Latin American countries urged universities to keep their focus local: "The social role of a university should be to prioritize its surrounding community…It is important to recognize where the level of education of the surrounding community has been raised, and the impact of alumni, e.g., in politics, in NGOs [non-governmental organizations] and in schools."

A new framework will require thoughtful design

Most agreed that the first step is to establish the goal of each evaluation. This will help to determine which approach to opt for — 'threshold,' i.e., setting a minimum bar for quality, or 'formative,' promoting competition, quality and innovation.

One participant in the European roundtable pointed to a Nordic model, in which institutions are closely involved in selecting evaluation parameters. This was thought to work well, resulting in a multidimensional evaluation that includes impact.

When it comes to setting priorities and targets, many academic leaders felt that a new evaluation system must balance freedom with responsibility and accountability. Those in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia favored the US National Science Foundation (NSF) model, in which the amount of funding is determined by the NSF (top-down). It is then distributed by scientists, who evaluate the quality themselves (bottom-up). Leaders in this region were happy for authorities to draft

the new system, but they wanted universities to have the option to adjust it to align with their strategic goals. They also felt it was important that international systems consider the strategies of the institutions or countries being assessed.

However, one concern about the top-down approach was that universities are not always well informed about evaluations. To complicate matters, in countries like Uzbekistan, different agencies have different evaluation systems with their own goals and visions.

Other important elements that leaders across regions wanted to see introduced were:

- **Appropriate timescales for evaluation**: They felt that the current 12-month period between university ranking releases is "too short."
- **Incentives** that will encourage students and researchers to participate. One noted: "Students are currently motivated by grades, rather than an interest in exploration."
- **Acknowledgement for student projects:** These were viewed as measures of innovation and societal impact that currently go unrecognized.
- **Recognition for mentoring activities:** Academic leaders in Poland, for example, felt that advice from their counterparts in other countries could help to develop their research, and wanted incentives for these partnerships introduced.

In addition, their wish list included a reduction in the administrative burden for those being evaluated, and a continuing focus on ethical practices.

"We cannot compromise on research integrity."

— SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, EUROPE

In fact, themes such as "trust" and "transparency" were top of mind for many, particularly when talk turned to **qualitative measures**. The importance of giving this kind of assessment a more prominent role in evaluation was a recurring theme during the roundtables. But participants acknowledged that supplementing metrics-based assessment with a more human approach is problematic, and could conflict with their desire for objective, consistent, expert assessment across all areas.

Comments included:

- How can one expert on my broad area of research make a proper assessment of my work?
- One person with strong views can swing a panel.
- Committees are fine, but not if reviewers stay in the job too long.
- There is no transparency in the current peer review system.

Most felt that peer review is the only viable qualitative assessment method currently at our disposal, so wanted to see a focus on improving the process. But this led to questions around scalability, costs and strain on resources.

"Peer-review is creaking, how can we add more?"

— SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, EUROPE

As explored in Chapter 1, many roundtable attendees identified the need for more and better options for capturing excellence in **education and teaching**. However, others pointed out that research remains the lead priority for many universities, so must continue to have appropriate weight assigned to it, even as the evaluation system expands to include broader measures.

Closing note

It's clear that the improvements academic leaders proposed are designed to resolve their frustrations with the current system explored in Chapter 1.

But all roundtable participants agreed that finding a way to achieve their goals won't be easy and that incremental improvements might be the best they can hope for in some areas. They also understood that it won't all be smooth sailing. As Polish leaders acknowledged, when their country began developing its first evaluation system in a post-socialist era, they wondered whether they could learn from the experiences of their global counterparts. However, experience has shown them that there are no shortcuts: "For systems to evolve, you must be prepared to make the usual mistakes along the way."

3. The way forward

Which factors did academic leaders identify as potential game changers?

Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) was mentioned repeatedly in discussions, with academic leaders identifying opportunities to use it to:

- **Improve how research is conceived, conducted and communicated:** AI is already proving its value in a variety of areas, from sifting and analyzing data to providing personalized and predictive services. This use was only expected to grow.
- **Innovate teaching and learning:** Generative AI is currently used in coursework and homework assignments, and has the potential to create personalized learning materials, as well as provide virtual mentoring and other support.
- **Aid peer review:** Options identified included scanning manuscripts for ethical issues, such as plagiarism, and checking for alignment with journals' aims & scopes.
- **Optimize institutions' impact:** Studies are already underway to explore the use of AI in predicting and evaluating contributions.
- **Convert qualitative comments into quantitative metrics:** Many felt that AI is a promising route to turn qualitative comments into practical indicators.
- **Build evaluation tools:** These include algorithms designed to analyze case studies.

Academic leaders who attended the Asia-Pacific and Oceania roundtable pointed out that new universities and research institutions are already actively encouraging the use of new technologies, such as AI: "We anticipate technology will drive teaching and research innovation, thereby cultivating a new generation of students and researchers."

But although the majority of roundtable participants globally viewed AI as a force for good in evaluation, they were also realistic about its limitations. And they acknowledged that technologies, such as the chatbot ChatGPT, present new challenges; for example, determining the originality of written work.

Another general concern was the opportunity for bias, errors or manipulation to creep into AI algorithms. They felt that these could impact researchers' faith in AI systems and ultimately erode public confidence in research.

"Trust will be paramount here."

— SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA AND CENTRAL ASIA

Others wondered how research and health will fare if ChatGPT leads us to a world of "virtual or à la carte universities." One suggested solution for these issues was to place the responsibility for building AI-powered evaluation tools in the hands of companies that have already established a reputation in the field of information analytics.

Collaborative action

There was consensus that the academic community must pick up the pace when it comes to transforming evaluation. And leaders agreed that progress will depend on stakeholders not only agreeing on objectives, models and timelines, but forming an alliance: "You need action by a substantial number to move the needle."

"Our goal is to get to a point where more universities, funding agencies and governments are willing to say these are the measures we all agree on."

— SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, ASIA-PACIFIC AND OCEANIA

Grassroots support

Another area of general agreement was that change works better when it's driven by the academic community, and not by governments. This view won particular support from those in Latin America, who pointed to a lack of leadership from the relevant government departments in their region. This inside-out approach was seen as an opportunity to ensure that evaluation serves the needs of the community, and doesn't become contaminated by political agendas.

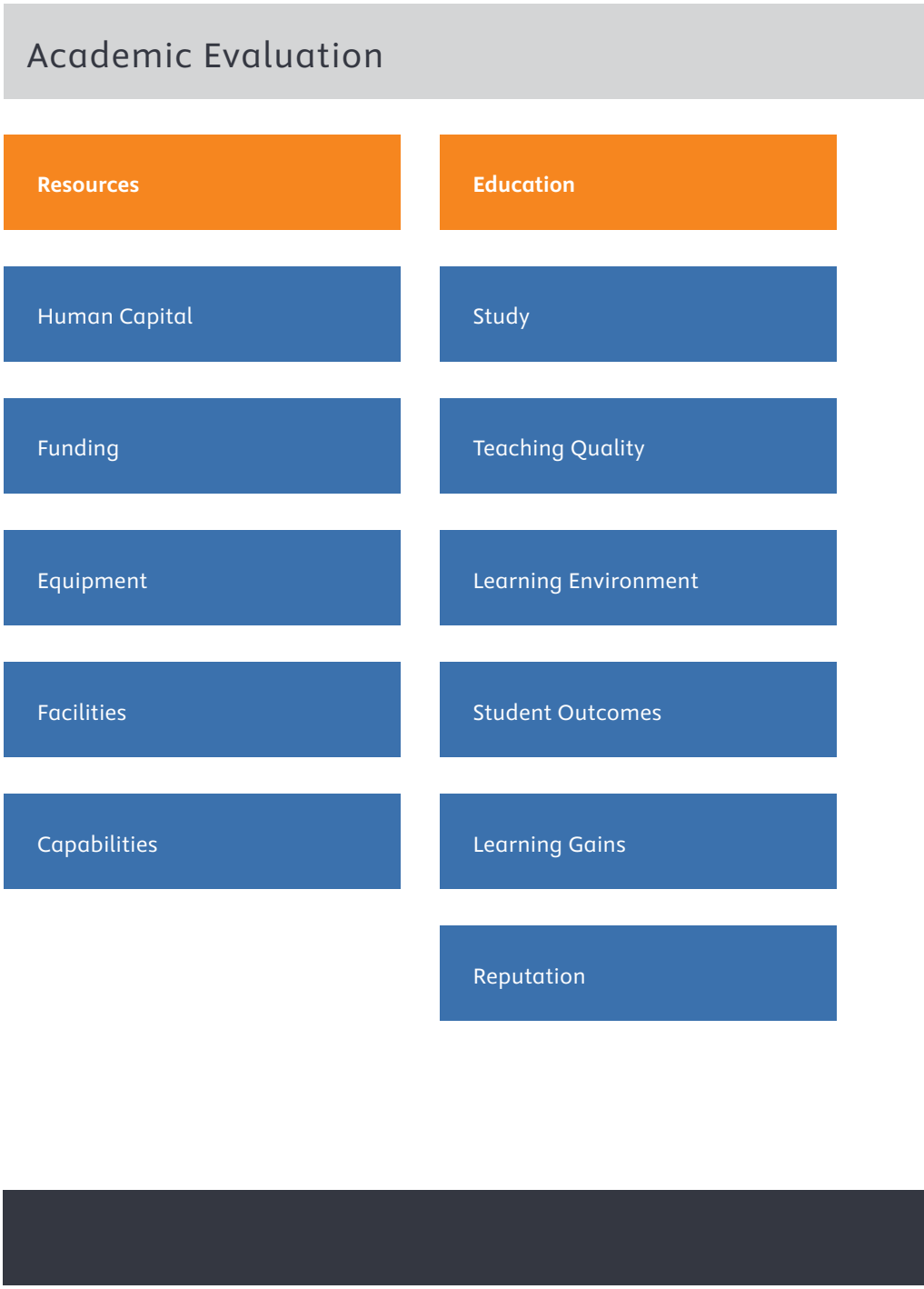
Closing note

Mapping the shortcomings of the existing evaluation system and imagining a new and better alternative are broad topics. They dominated our conversations with academic community leaders, leaving little time to explore in detail how the community should move forward. There were two points, however, that roundtable participants made very clear:

- At the academy, we want evolution not revolution.
- A new system should be open to evolution.

4. A high-level framework for evaluation

At the conclusion of the roundtable discussions, we took some time to analyze the feedback of participants. Many of their insights feature in the preceding three chapters. But we also drew on those learnings to develop this proposed high-level framework for academic evaluation. The five pillars capture the five key areas that academic leaders told us they want to see addressed.



Knowledge Creation Process (Throughput)	Knowledge Created (Output)	Outcomes and Impact
I & D	Quantity	Cultural
Vertification and Reproducibility	Excellence	Economic
Open Science	Collaboration	Environmental
Sustainability	Innovation	Health
Research Practices	Capabilities	Political
Multi-Interdisciplinarity	Commercialization	Societal
Knowledge Exchange		Technological

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE

5. Next steps: towards community-driven change

One of the most illuminating insights we gained from our listening tour on *The Future of Evaluation* is the level of alignment between academic leaders. They share many of the same frustrations with existing evaluation processes and agree on where and how they should improve. **This creates a powerful foundation for change.** However, as many roundtable participants remarked, achieving progress is going to require collaboration between stakeholders across the academic community.

At Elsevier, an important strand of our mission is to help the community advance science. One way we do that is by facilitating insights. When we set off on this listening tour that was our goal — to draw out those insights. We listened carefully to what academic leaders had to say and the draft evaluation framework on pages 14–15 is our attempt to summarize what we heard.

Our next step will be to share this report more widely with members of the academic community to see if it resonates — for example, we will discuss it with academic leaders, research funders and organizations seeking to evolve evaluation, such as the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment, UK Research and Innovation, and the Australian Research Council. We will also share it at the conferences we attend in the weeks and months ahead.

Using the feedback we receive, we will continue to update the framework and consider how we can best contribute to the needs identified. For example, convening follow-up discussions with leaders and policymakers is one potential way forward. This will help to connect the dots across regions, between personal and institutional evaluation, and between research and education. Another important step will be to work collaboratively on developing meaningful indicators that support the areas shown in each of the framework's five pillars. Progress in this area is going to require an upgraded toolbox of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Advanced technologies and processes that extract and analyse data at scale will also play an important role. ■

"Our goal is to get to a point where more universities, funding agencies and governments are willing to say these are the measures we all agree on."

— SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADER, ASIA-PACIFIC AND OCEANIA

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