



The Metricised University

Purpose, Reliability, and Consequences?

Guest Editor

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We hereby invite contributions to a peer-reviewed special issue on *“University Metrics: Purpose, Reliability, and Consequence?”* This issue of Academic Quarter is a continuation of the publication from 2016, vol. 13: *“The Challenges of Arts and Humanities”*, in which the researchers at the time were able to point out the challenges that the university Arts and Humanities faculties were struggling with. Then, as now, the problems stem from the desire for applicability, profit, and impact of humanities research. With this issue, we aim to contribute to the emerging discussion of the metrics and measurements to which university staff, both in Denmark and abroad, are increasingly subjected.

Metrics and metricisation have become a central part of life in the modern university and are highlighted by many as one of its defining features. For example, Gonzales & Nunez in their article *“The ranking regime and the production of knowledge: Implications for academia”* describe the modern university as a *“ranking regime”* (Gonzales & Nunez, 2014). Another example is Smyth, who in his book *The Toxic University: Zombie-Leadership, Academic Rockstars and Neo-liberal Ideology*, identifies metricisation as one of four key characteristics of the modern, market-driven university. The other three

closely connected traits are the introduction of market mechanisms, competition, and audits (Smyth, 2017).

The metrics found in today's universities are diverse and include, among others, those measuring and ranking institutional performance in relation to research and teaching output. Gonzales & Nunez note that the European University Association estimated that in 2013 there were at least 32 different organisations ranking universities on the basis of such measurements (Gonzales & Nunez, 2014, p. 4). Nationally, universities are measured on a range of factors, including research output, student completion time and completion rates, graduate employability, etc., several of which affect the level of government funding allocated to each institution. Internally, staff and groups of staff are similarly assessed on performance in research, teaching, acquisition of external research funding, etc. Further examples include metrics evaluating students' academic performance, assessments of particular professional groups or functions such as IT and support services, fulfilment of management duties, and a host of other organisational assessments, e.g., of the study environment or working environment. These latter kinds of metrics often fall outside the focus of analyses of university metrics, but they too may form the subject of contributions to the planned issue.

Critical discussions of metrics often focus on reasons for their introduction and their roots in New Public Management thinking (see e.g. Taylor, 2003; Lorenz, 2014; Fraser & Taylor, 2016; Watts, 2017), on their inadequacy (see e.g. Sayer, 2015; Muller, 2019; Flemming, 2021), and on both the intended and unintended consequences of metricisation (see e.g. Prickett & Erskine-Hill, 2002; Gonzales & Nunez, 2014; West, 2016; Smyth, 2017; Feldman & Sandoval, 2018).

For this special issue, we invite articles which focus on the following, or similar, themes:

- The purposes and functions of metrics, including explicit rationales, hidden political agendas, and unconscious psychological functions
- The reliability of measurements and the challenges of measurement in general

- Intended and unintended consequences for staff, students, and wider society, including issues such as mental well-being, the nature and quality of interpersonal relations, the nature and quality of teaching and research, the nature and quality of administrative work, etc.
- Strategies for surviving—or living with—metrics

Practical information

Abstract: approx. 150 words

Article: approx. 3,000–3,500 words

Video essay: max. 7–12 minutes. Shorter versions are welcome, and it may be appropriate to submit more than one

Academic guide text to accompany video essay: 1,000–1,500 words

Abstracts and articles should be submitted to Annemette Helligsø (anhe@ikk.aau.dk). Detailed author guidelines and further information are available on the journal's website: <https://journals.aau.dk/index.php/ak>

Video Essays

Contributors are welcome to submit video essays under the following guidelines: Video essays must be a maximum of 7–12 minutes in length and accompanied by an academic guiding text of 1,000–1,500 words that clearly reflects on the scholarly contribution of the piece. Video essays must be original works of publishable quality within a rigorous academic context and may take argumentative, expository, explanatory, documentary, performative, essayistic, poetic, symbolic (metaphorical), or artistic form—or a combination of these. The guiding text must clearly explain the argument of the video essay and/or the insights it offers. This guiding text must follow the article style sheet to be found in the author guidelines.

Note: The European Accessibility Act (EAA) requires audiovisual media providers to incorporate features such as closed captions and audio descriptions to ensure accessibility for individuals with hearing or visual impairments. Contributors of video essays are therefore required to include closed captions in all submissions.

Abstract
Around 150 words

Full article
Around 3,000 - 3,500 words

Video essay
Max 7-12 minutes

Text to video essay
1,000 - 1,500 words

Video essays must be final versions and submitted as a separate MP4 video file. *Academic Quarter* supports publication but not the technical development of video essays, though contributors are welcome to discuss works in progress with the editors. Video essays and their accompanying texts are reviewed together. Review criteria are:

- clarity of the argument (cogency)
- technical and stylistic quality of the video material
- clarity of the accompanying text

Submission/review of abstract

April 15th 2026

Abstract Response

May 1st 2026

Submission of Articles/Videos

July 17th 2026

Peer Reviews Response

September 15th 2026

Resubmission of Articles/Videos

October 20th 2026

Layout/Copyedit

November 21th 2026

Publication

December 15th 2026

Deadlines

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Submission of articles/videos for peer review:	July 17, 2026
Peer review returned to authors:	September 15 2026
Resubmission of articles/videos after peer review:	October 20, 2026
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Publication:	December 15, 2026