

Can we fix it? Are incremental tweaks to research practices, cultures & assessment sufficient, or is it time for more radical change?

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UKRIO Annual Conference, 25 May 2022



...what actions
we've taken



Plans

Research

...motion
Criteria

Collegiality
Open research

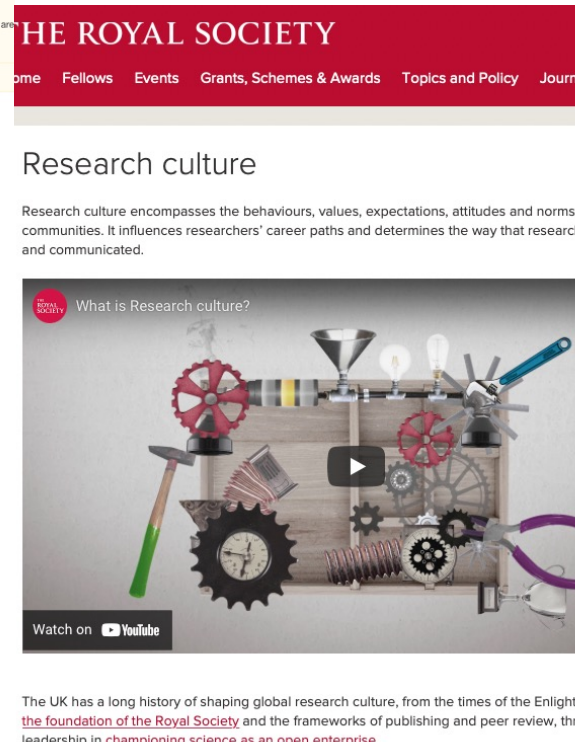
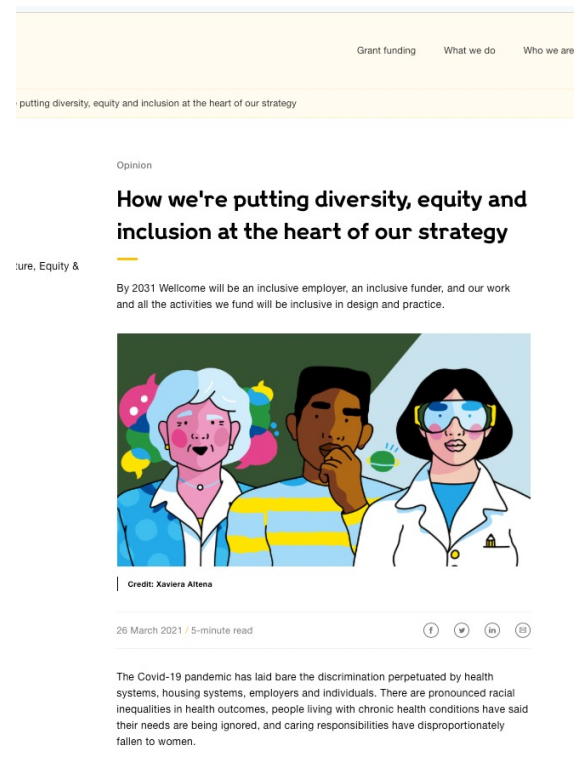


...research scientist
& technologists

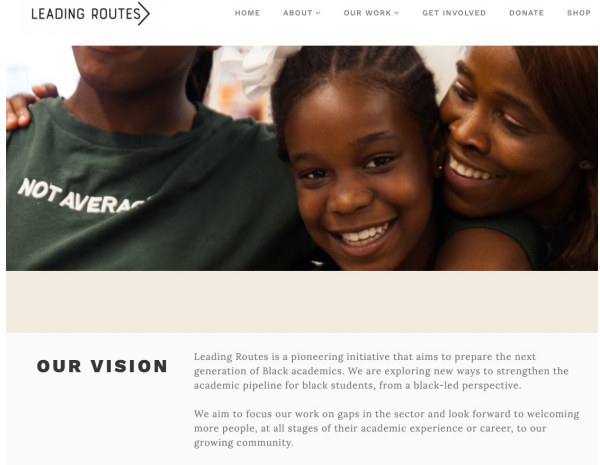
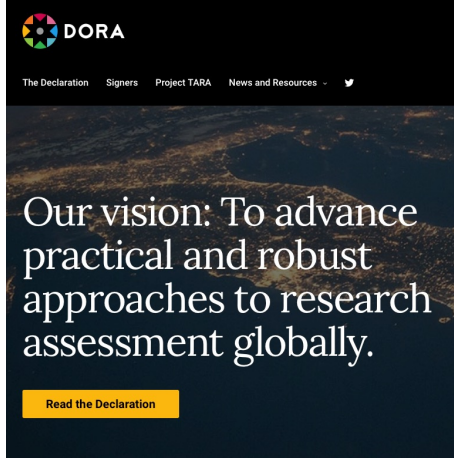


What I hope to cover in 25 mins:

1. The 'cultural turn' in UK research policy
2. Progress we've seen...
3. Paradoxes of the pandemic
4. The yawning chasm between rhetoric & lived reality – our new “valley of death”
5. A white, middle-class, able-bodied man in his late-40s losing patience in public
6. So yes, let's talk about research cultures:
 - Material cultures
 - Cultures of honesty
 - Cultures of experimentation
 - Cultures of formative assessment
 - Cultures of creative chaos



The 'cultural turn' in UK research policy



Jess Wade's one-woman mission to diversify Wikipedia's science stories

Our largest encyclopedia overwhelmingly recognises the achievements of white men. For physicist Jess Wade, fighting this bias has been an uphill battle

HUMANS 5 February 2020

By Joshua Howgego



Thomas Angus/Imperial College London



Artwork by Michaela Machicote - All rights reserved

Welcome to the official page of the Cite Black Women movement!

"I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood." - Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action"

OUR STORY



In November 2017 *Christen A. Smith* created Cite Black Women as a campaign to push people to engage in a radical praxis of citation that acknowledges and honors Black women's transnational intellectual production. It started out with t-shirts with the simple phrase "Cite Black Women." The idea was to motivate everyone, but particularly academics, to critically reflect on their everyday practices of citation and start to

Campaigns & creativity from the grassroots

Work still in progress...



R&D People and Culture Strategy

People at the heart of R&D



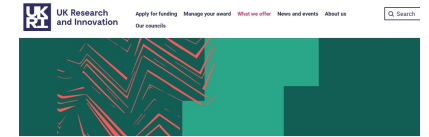
Research Culture Statement 2022

Since our first Research Culture Assurance Statement in 2019, the world has faced unprecedented circumstances and our university has experienced one of the most disruptive times in its history. As a result, so many in our research community have had to adapt to new ways of working and faced uncertainties in the wake of COVID-19.

Meanwhile, the University has published its Research Strategy 2020-25, which prioritises careers, collaboration and creativity. The importance of research culture runs through this strategy. While acknowledging that things have changed, it also recognises that our core principles for research should stay the same: that we succeed as a university when individuals succeed in their careers, that we recognise the variety of contributions that are made to research, and that we value the quality of what we do over its quantity.

Naturally, the direction of some of our research culture efforts has changed as we have worked hard to adapt to meet the numerous challenges which have arisen. COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, a negative impact on the ability of all staff to work productively. This impact arises from both personal circumstances and project-specific issues. However, we recognise that this impact has been differential in nature, affecting some colleagues more than others. Responding to these challenges has led us to develop a series of robust support measures to assist our researchers in these changing times. Alongside these initiatives, we made significant progress with research culture at a strategic level, including:

- Publishing our [Research Strategy](#) in October 2020.
- Launching the [Lab for Academic Culture](#).
- Consulting on and publishing our [action plan for the researcher development concordat](#), which is now rolled out across the University, with leadership from a new Concordat implementation post.
- Winning a Guardian Higher Education Award for our work in research culture in 2020.
- Hosting a [Wellcome Townhall](#) on research culture and contributing to international discussions around research assessment and career development, including through the GuildHE in 2020.
- Becoming a signatory of both the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DoRA\)](#) and the



Research and innovation culture

People and culture are fundamental to research and innovation because they drive the creative and dynamic system that we need to support the community to thrive. Positive cultures support not just researchers and innovators but also the entire ecosystem which supports the research and innovation endeavour.

We strive to foster a system where everyone is appreciated and valued, that works for everyone, in everyone.

The role of UKRI

UKRI is uniquely positioned to catalyse efforts to improve culture, building on good work already under way, to connect up the whole system, covering multiple disciplines and cross-sector research and innovation.

Our approach in this area is multi-faceted and includes:

- reflecting on our own systems and processes
- how these influence the wider system
- improving our understanding of how we can support the whole research and innovation (R&I) community to undertake the co-creation of environments that support a positive culture.

Related content

- [Find research policies and guidance on Good Research Research Hub](#)
- [Supporting the community adoption of full-time research CVs](#)

Science Minister on 'The Research Landscape'

Amanda Solloway spoke at a Higher Education Policy Institute webinar about improving the way we evaluate research.

From: [Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy](#) and [Amanda Solloway MP](#)

Published 20 October 2020

Delivered on: 20 October 2020 (Transcript of the speech, exactly as it was delivered)



Paradoxes of the pandemic



"The scientific community spent the pre-pandemic years designing faster ways of doing experiments, sharing data, and developing vaccines, allowing it to mobilize quickly when COVID-19 emerged.

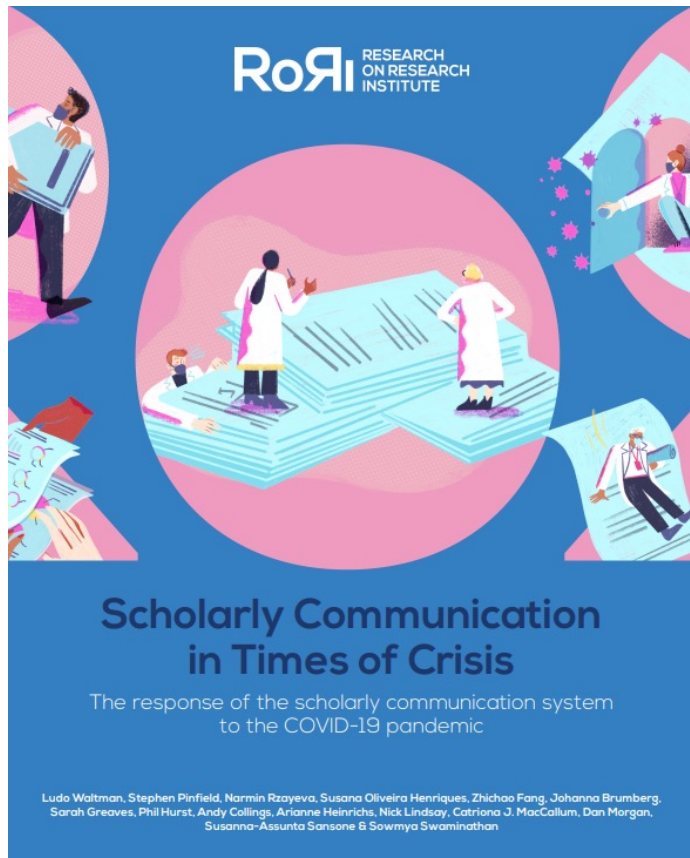
Its goal now should be to address its many lingering weaknesses. Warped incentives, wasteful practices, overconfidence, inequality, a biomedical bias—COVID-19 has exposed them all. And in doing so, it offers the world of science a chance to practice one of its most important qualities: self-correction." **Ed Yong, *The Atlantic***



Covid-19 Changed How the World Does Science, Together

Never before, scientists say, have so many of the world's researchers focused so urgently on a single topic. Nearly all other research has ground to a halt.

Build back better?

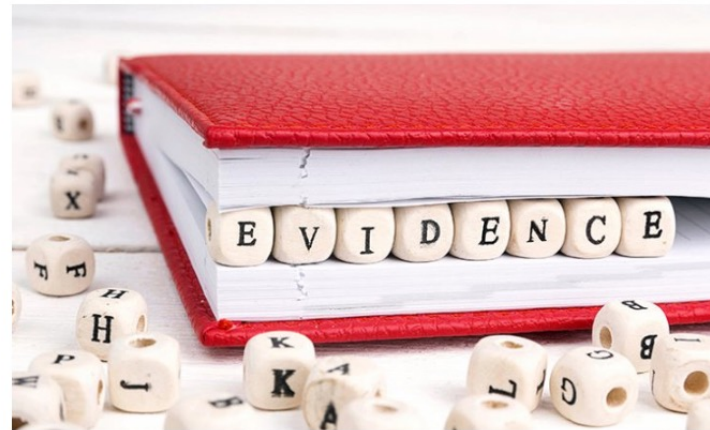


FUNDERS 10 FEB 2021

UKRI accused of 'cherry-picking' evidence in PhD Covid response

By Sophie Inge

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Strongly worded report condemns funder's pandemic response as 'insulting in the extreme'

PhD students have accused the UK's national research funder of "cherry-picking" evidence and ignoring their own experiences in its grant-extension policies during the pandemic.

They are now calling for UK Research and Innovation to more fully involve them in decision-making and to deploy a blanket six-month extension to all PhD students it funds, or else risk exacerbating inequalities in academia.

Editorial

 Society and Space

The view from here

Natalie Oswin
University of Toronto, Canada

EPD: Society and Space
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In March 2020, as COVID-19 spread and the globe locked down, we announced a *Society and Space* (S&S) editorial decision to "press pause" on our normal working practices (Editors, 2020). Our announcement began:

For readers of and contributors to *Society and Space*, the COVID-19 pandemic and the response of governments, institutions, and communities are undoubtedly of concern. Many of us will be paying close attention to how power, discourse, governance, politics, resistance and difference are enacted and made manifest in the coming weeks and months.

Acknowledging increased care work, a climate of fear and uncertainty, and significant challenges to how scholars teach and do research, we stated that:

to continue as usual right now would be untenable and unethical. Capitalist globalization has not only broken our health system, it has also broken our education system... By pressing pause, we hope that we can change our working practices in a way that points – however tentatively and modestly – to a different ethos that recognizes the challenges that our post-pandemic future will pose.

We then pledged to stop sending new submissions to review, halt automated reviewer reminders, and generally slow down operations for about a month; and to continue to assess our practices throughout the unfolding pandemic, always prioritizing solidarity and care. We closed our statement with activist and organizer Mariame Kaba's entreaty to, "let this radicalize you, rather than lead you to despair."

As managing editor of S&S, I have long meant to write with an update for our readers, authors, and reviewers. The more time that has passed, though, the less capable I have felt of saying anything worthwhile, or at least of saying anything in the determined, hope-tinged tone with which we wrote in 2020.

It will surely surprise no scholar that in the more than two years since our "pause", editorial work has become far more rather than any less challenging. We have done as we said we would do and adjusted our working practices in accordance with the situation. This

Between rhetoric & reality: a new R&D ‘valley of death’

I joined the *S&S* editorial team in 2009 –, it is a mechanism for collegiality, curiosity, constructive critique, and generous engagement. As a labour practice, though, it is horribly flawed. Our former long-time editor Stuart Elden said as much in 2008, highlighting the difficulty of securing reviewer commitments and reports and noting that, “something in this system is breaking down.” Back then, and indeed until the pandemic began, we generally had to send out six to eight invitations to get three reports, and reviewers occasionally reneged on their commitments or, more frequently, were a few weeks or so late due to unforeseen circumstances. Now, we most often send out 10 to 15 reviewer invitations to yield even two reviewer commitments, and reports regularly come in months late with a hefty percentage never materializing at all. The system’s breakdown has greatly accelerated, in tune with the pandemic’s characteristic ability to widen pre-existing cracks into chasms.

In 2008, Stuart described peer review as an “exchange economy.” Acknowledging the problematic political economy of academic journal publishing (i.e. reviewing as unremunerated labour, and “the politics of state-funded research generating profit for private corporations”), he made a case for professional reciprocity and announced that the journal expected any submitting author to agree to review three submissions in return, as payback for the three reports generated on their own submission. Now, with a greater proportion of submitting authors employed precariously or not at all, and the rising workloads for all scholars regardless of rank or employment status, I cannot articulate such a demand. From my vantage point managing over 550 new and revised submissions per year, peer review can no longer be expected to function as even an “exchange economy.” In the current conjuncture, it is mutual aid at best. Despite the incredible erosion of institutional and social supports, those who have the capacity to review are stepping up. They are going against the grain of the academic competitive individualism, and this, at least, is heartening.

So I write, *though* I have no solutions to offer, to say that I am grateful to those who help us keep *S&S* going and understand all too well why many who share our intellectual and political commitments are not able to pitch in. I also write *because* I have no solutions to offer. I am privileged, as an editor, to have a window into the development of so many ideas, and to play a role in facilitating scholarly conversations and debates. Through that window, I also see so much evidence of exhaustion and burnout and material insecurity amongst colleagues and peers. So I write to say to those who can do something about this – e.g. the aforementioned “ever expanding educational administrative class” – that this is the view from here, here being one of those “top-tier” journals you all want your faculty to publish in to prove their and your institutions’ “merit” and “excellence.” A reckoning with the facts of exploitation, rather than EDI initiatives and more memos congratulating us all on jobs well done through adversity, would be very welcome any time now.

‘Pervasive’ inequality derailing black UK chemists’ careers, report finds

Royal Society of Chemistry says black and minority ethnic chemists paid less and less likely to get research funding



MPs were told only a ‘tiny’ number of research grants in science and technology were going to black academics. Photograph: Cultura Creative (RF)/Alamy

Black and minority ethnic chemists face “pervasive” inequalities that restrict their access to research funding and derail their academic careers, according to a new report by the Royal Society of [Chemistry](#).

The report found that while black students were well represented at undergraduate level, very few were able to develop academic careers, with only one black professor of chemistry of the 575 professors working in UK universities.



Material cultures

Replication and Reproduction: Crises in Psychology and Academic Labour

Felicity Callard 

First Published February 24, 2022 | Research Article |  Check for updates

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10892680211055660>

[Article information](#) ▾



Abstract

Discussions of the replication crisis in psychology require more substantive analysis of the crisis of academic labour and of social reproduction in the university. Both the replication crisis and the crisis of social reproduction in the university describe a failure in processes of reproducing something. The financial crisis of 2007–8 shortly preceded the emergence of the replication crisis, as well as exacerbated ongoing tendencies in the organisation and practices of university research (particularly the use of precarious contracts and the adjunctification of research). These provide two reasons to address these two named crises together. But many analyses of and responses to the replication crisis turn to research culture, often at the expense of adequate investigations of research labour. Today's psychological sciences are made through multiple forms of labour: these include researchers, who range from senior principal investigators to sub-contracted, and exploited, research assistants; research participants/subjects, who include those providing labour for experiments via exploitative platforms including Amazon Mechanical Turk; and workers providing heterogeneous technical and administrative labour. Through understanding what is at stake for these multiple forms of labour, psychology might better analyse problems besetting psychology today, as well as develop different imaginaries and practices for how to address them.

“Cause we are living in a material world
And I am a material girl” Madonna



“...the turn to “research culture” looks good on paper, but there’s zero reason to believe it will change practice. Any incremental changes at the margins will be insignificant compared to the core issues of pay, pensions and precarity...

Since 2009, the value of pay in HE has fallen over 20%, a period in which real wage across the wider economy have been flat. The only possible message this sends is that society values research and researchers 20% less than it did a decade ago.

You don’t need a PhD to work out the impact of this on day-to-day morale, the ambivalence and hostility of government and university management to its research staff casts an ever-darker shadow over the joys of the job. Far from world-leading, UK research culture is sliding ever further into the doldrums, and it will take much more than a new era of management jargon to fix it. “

Mid-career
social
scientist,
UK Russell
Group
university
April 2022

Power and bullying in research

Eric Lander, director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy and science adviser to US President Joe Biden, resigned on Feb 7, after an internal review found that he had bullied staff members. The investigation was concluded weeks before but only came to light following reporting by *Politico*. This event is emblematic of research's failure to rein in workplace bullying and of a research culture that remains in thrall to big names and bigger egos.

Fiona Watt, head of the UK's Medical Research Council, has apologised following allegations of bullying and an internal investigation. Alice Gast, president of Imperial College London, has also recently apologised for bullying. An Imperial investigation found that Gast "exercised her position in such a way as to undermine [staff] both personally and professionally". The "problem of power being centred in two or three individuals" cited in Imperial's report offers insight into the structural issues at play in all three of these cases.

Wellcome's 2020 report, *What Researchers Think About The Culture They Work In* lays out the perspective of scientists subject to the behaviour of powerful senior staff. It found that 61% of researchers witnessed bullying or harassment, but only 37% felt comfortable speaking up. 75% of researchers felt that creativity had been stifled by research culture, with 43% believing that their workplace puts more value on metrics and output than research quality. Institutions also seem to struggle to establish an agreed definition of bullying and harassment, and different thresholds can lead to inconsistent responses.

as incentivising data massaging and manipulation, and stand in contrast to the remuneration and job security of those who lead research teams.

Bullying also intersects with bias and discrimination, and hampers the inclusion of diverse viewpoints. The latest *Nature* jobs survey found that women in research were twice as likely to report mistreatment than women in industry jobs, and that one in six reported gender discrimination in the workplace. Respondents in the UK who did not identify as white reported experiencing discrimination, bullying, or harassment at twice the rate of their white colleagues. The result will be exclusion and the stifling of ideas and diverse perspectives that fuel research innovation, discovery, and application.

The distribution of grants contributes to the competitive culture of research and often supports unequal power structures. The way that superstar scientists are heavily associated with breakthrough research does not reflect the teams that underpin all the difficult and arduous labour, but the funding and grants that result from having high-profile names publishing cutting edge research means institutions are incentivised to preserve their most lucrative employees.

Research doesn't have to be structured like this. Wellcome's report states that a positive research culture is diverse, collaborative, and transparent, where individuals and their contributions feel supported and valuable, and creativity is given space to flourish. Simple solutions put forward include anonymous grant submissions, specific funding to provide equality and



See World Report page 705



Dark Academia How Universities Die Peter Fleming



Cultures of honesty

Cultures of experimentation

SCIENCE FUNDERS GAMBLE ON GRANT LOTTERIES

A growing number of research agencies are assigning money randomly.

By David Adam

Albert Einstein famously insisted that God does not play dice. But the Health Research Council of New Zealand does. The agency is one of a growing number of funders that award grants

partly through random selection. Earlier this year, for example, David Ackerley, a biologist at Victoria University of Wellington, received NZ\$150,000 (US\$96,000) to develop new ways to eliminate cells – after his number came up in the council's annual lottery.

"We didn't think the traditional process was

 Swiss National Science Foundation

What's new

[Homepage](#) > [What's new](#) > [Drawing lots as a tie-breaker](#)

Drawing lots as a tie-breaker



31.03.2021

After a pilot phase, the SNSF is introducing the drawing of lots as a potential tie-breaker in all funding schemes. It may be used in cases where equally good proposals cannot be further differentiated objectively.



 VolkswagenStiftung

News & Press

[Home](#) > [Funding](#) > [Our Funding Portfolio at a Glance](#) > [Experiment! – In search of bold research](#)

Partially Randomized Procedure - Lottery and Peer Review

Since 2017, the Volkswagen Foundation is testing a new selection procedure for project applications: In the funding initiative "Experiment!", part of the funded projects are selected by an independent jury. Additionally, further projects are drawn from those applications that are suitable for the program and eligible for funding. Background and reactions to a new and unusual selection procedure.

“If I look back on many years of involvement in political decision-making and policy-making around science, innovation and R&D, I am struck by how much of it tends to turn on gut feel of the individuals involved, than on hard evidence and analysis.

This is ironic, since good science is all about testing hypotheses against data, empirical results and facts. I do believe there is a potential role for UKRI here - at modest cost - to take a deliberate strategic decision to sponsor and promote more good research, analysis and evidence-gathering on “what works” in policy on science, R&D and innovation. We should, in short, live by our values!”



JUN
20

Experiment, translate and transform: priorities for research on research

by Research on Research Institute

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**Experiment, translate and transform: priorities for the next decade
of research on research. RoRI Phase 2 launch event.**

About this event

RoRI's mission is to improve how research is funded, practised and evaluated, so that it works better for everybody. RoRI was established in 2019 as a two-year pilot and has been able to make significant progress in turning the tools of research back on itself—generating data and analysis that can improve how we design, manage and support research.

Experiment, translate and transform: priorities for the next decade of research on research

Please join us for a special online event to kickstart RoRI's second phase, from **15:00-18:00 CEST** (14:00-17:00 BST) on **20 June 2022**. The event is co-hosted with the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).

Our opening keynote speaker will be [Michael Nielsen](#) who is a

Date and time

Mon, 20 June 2022
15:00 – 18:00 CEST

The experi men tal

Research funder's handbook

A RoRI publication

By Sandra Bendiscioli, Teo Firpo, Albert Bravo-Biosca, Eszter Czibor,
Michele Garfinkel, Tom Stafford, James Wilsdon and Helen Buckley Woods.

Cultures of formative assessment

OPINION 12 OCT 2021

The next REF can drive a better research culture

By Tanita Casci, Miles Padgett, Grace Gottlieb and David Price

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Reviewing the role of metrics in research assessment

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Cultures of creative chaos



PROFESSIONAL CAMPUS JOBS EVENTS RANKINGS STUDENT



Is 'universal basic income' a better option than research grants?

Instead of spending time competing for competitive funding, academics should be given a lump sum, paper suggests

October 10, 2017

[David Matthews](#)

Twitter: [@DavidMJourno](#)

Every tenured academic should receive a "basic income" to fund their research projects, rather than wasting their time submitting largely unsuccessful bids for grants, two researchers say.

All researchers would be entitled to a stipend every five years of about \$600,000 (£460,000) in the US and just over \$500,000 in the Netherlands if research grants' total value was shared out equally, the pair calculate, enough to hire a similar



Source: Getty



<http://researchonresearch.org>
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