Case Study: The University of Queensland
The role of research metrics at a top-ranked global university

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Executive Summary

SciVal® is one of the tools used at The University of Queensland (UQ) to assess and benchmark its research output. The solution works with the university’s repository, UQ eSpace, to generate detailed reports that support various research evaluation activities. The data derived using SciVal has enabled a more meaningful analysis of research performance.

The University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, has long been known for world-class research that has far-reaching social, economic, health and environmental impacts. Research success is measured by quality and impact. International rankings highlight the excellence of UQ’s research performance. The 2015 Excellence in Research for Australia assessment ranked all UQ’s research at world standard or above. The results reaffirmed UQ as one of the nation’s three leading research-focused universities. Elsevier’s SciVal is used at the university to analyse its research profile. The data can be used in a variety of ways to assess research output and impact.

Dr Amberyn Thomas, Associate Director of the UQ Library’s Scholarly Communication and Repository Services, and her colleagues in the Research Outputs and Impact team have responded to a growing demand for reports on UQ research for the purposes of:

- Developing an accurate assessment of the university’s performance compared to the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) benchmarks
- Evaluating the university’s existing strengths and uncovering potential areas of inquiry
- Supporting grant applications

The ability to import data directly into SciVal from the university’s repository — UQ eSpace — has helped the team increase the efficiency and precision of its reporting. It has provided the team with new and useful ways to access the data in the repository, enabling a more meaningful understanding of the university’s research output, including data on research collaborations with other global institutions.
Background

Since it was founded in 1909, The University of Queensland (UQ) has made significant contributions to Queensland, Australia and the world. The university is one of Australia’s leading teaching and research universities, ranked in the world’s top 50 by both the QS World University Rankings and the Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities. It is also ranked well within the top 100 in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, the U.S. News Best Global Universities Rankings and the Academic Ranking of World Universities.

UQ is one of only three Australian members of the global Universitas 21, a founding member of the Group of Eight (Go8) universities, and a member of Universities Australia.

The university has one of the largest academic libraries in Australia. UQ Library provides information and library services at each of the university’s campuses, as well as at major teaching hospitals in Brisbane and regionally. The Ranking Web of World Repositories places the research repository, UQ eSpace, among the top 20 worldwide, and second in Oceania.

For more information, see www.uq.edu.au

Challenge

Like other top-ranking universities, The University of Queensland continues to evaluate and pursue a meaningful understanding of its research performance.

There are compelling external factors for rigorous analysis: research performance underpins university rankings, which are used as an indicator of quality in the academic landscape. Research quality also impacts on funding since it is a determining factor in the performance-based block funding universities receive from government, which is informed by Excellence in Research for Australian (ERA) evaluations (www.arc.gov.au).

The university also has internal motivations for evaluating its research output in its pursuit of world-class research.

The UQ Library has developed a team of staff with the knowledge and expertise to help the university analyze and understand its research output. Dr. Amberyn Thomas and the librarians in the UQ Library’s Research Outputs and Impact team provide a service that is in heavy demand.

Their challenge is to find the best tools to support the university in analyzing its research performance for a variety of purposes.

They use a range of tools including SciVal to produce detailed reports, data, and metrics, which can be used in grant applications, research evaluations, and for highlighting existing and potential research collaborations. They also provide metrics-based data to organizational units within the university to inform decision-making.
To meet the university’s demand for an efficient way to analyze its research performance and benchmark with other global universities, Dr. Thomas and her team turned to SciVal.

“SciVal has made it easier to benchmark critical categories against each other, down to a researcher and paper level.”

Solution
SciVal provides access to the research performance data of 12,000 research institutions worldwide. Importantly, SciVal also works with the university’s repository UQ eSpace, which includes more than 240,000 records of the university’s research output, including a growing number of research data records.

UQ eSpace is populated on a weekly basis using sophisticated workflows that capture publications information from databases like Scopus and Web of Science, as well as human resources and organizational structure data to associate publications with researchers and their faculty, school or centre.

“Using our data warehouse, we have the ability to segment the publications in our repository at a very detailed level and generate a list of publication EIDs,” Dr. Thomas said. She continues, “This can be the complete output of a school or a group of researchers during a certain time period. These lists can then be fed into SciVal as a publication set where we can do detailed analyses, using a range of metrics.”

Conclusion
With SciVal, UQ Library’s Research Outputs and Impact team are able to analyse the latest data from disparate data sets across the university’s systems. As a result, they have increased the frequency and speed with which they can produce research intelligence reports. Their rich analyses are drawing the attention of more and more staff at the university, and demand for bibliometric data has seen a sizeable increase.
“The ability to slice the publication data using our UQ eSpace repository and for further evaluation in SciVal is a total game changer. The fact that this can be quickly done has significantly reduced the preparation process, freeing up more time to focus on our investigations and enhancing our research strategy.”

—Dr. Amberyn Thomas, Associate Director
Scholarly Communication and Repository Services, UQ Library

SciVal provides a quick overview of the research performance of The University of Queensland, the various research areas they’re contributing to and the impact of their scholarly output.
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