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**University of London**

# Research Excellence and Evaluation Using a CRIS: A Cross-institutional Perspective

Dr. Mark Cox



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**KING'S**  
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**LONDON**

# King's College London

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- Situated over five London campuses
- One of the top seven UK universities for research earnings
- Has more than 6,500 staff
- 60 per cent of its research was assessed as world-leading or internationally excellent in the 2008 Research Assessment exercise

# Research Evaluation in the UK

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- All UK HE institutions are obliged to submit to a central evaluation exercise if they wish to receive Government funding for research
- Evaluation exercises have been run since the mid- 1980s
- Prior to 2013, these have been known as Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs)
- Following a review, submission requirements have been changed somewhat for the Research Excellence Framework (REF)

# Research Evaluation Framework

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- Funding levels for the institution are set based on performance in the REF
- As evaluation exercises are held approximately every six years, a poor performance can lead to long-term financial hardship
- Maintaining the reputation of the institution by a strong REF performance is also a key factor
- Assessment is carried out at a discipline level – Units of Assessment (UoAs) map broadly to departments in the institution

# REF data requirements

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- Research Outputs - 65% of final result
  - Up to four outputs submitted for each person submitted
  - Fewer outputs can be submitted for early career researchers or people with other individual circumstances
  - Citation information used by some UoAs, but only to inform peer-review
- Environment - 20%
  - Externally won research funding
  - Postgraduate student awards
  - Other research-related activity
- Impact – 15%

# Research Impact

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“For the purposes of the REF, impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia” (REF assessment guidelines)

- Impact has not been used previously in research assessment
- Impact can develop over a long timespan – eligible impact could develop from research carried out as far back as 1993 for REF
- Assessment based mainly on narrative “case studies”
- The “reach and significance” of the impact is assessed

# Research Information Systems at King's

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- In-house system developed from 2005 – Research Gateway – including feeds from main business systems (HR, awards, students)
- Used to support RAE 2008, but fell into disuse afterwards
- Agreement with Research Management Directorate (RMD) to implement Pure in early 2011
- Research Portal functionality also included
- Pure released to administrators in mid-2012
- REF module population began immediately following release
- Pure “full” launch (including Research Portal) in mid-2013

# REF procedures at King's

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- King's submitted to 27 UoAs
- Academic and administrative leads appointed for each UoA
- Small central support team in RMD
- Library support provided for research publication checking and bibliometric expertise
- REF Support team – included UoA administrative leads and central support staff, plus IT, Library and HR staff
- Vice-Principals monitored progress and quality of submission through “dress-rehearsal” exercises with academic UoA leads

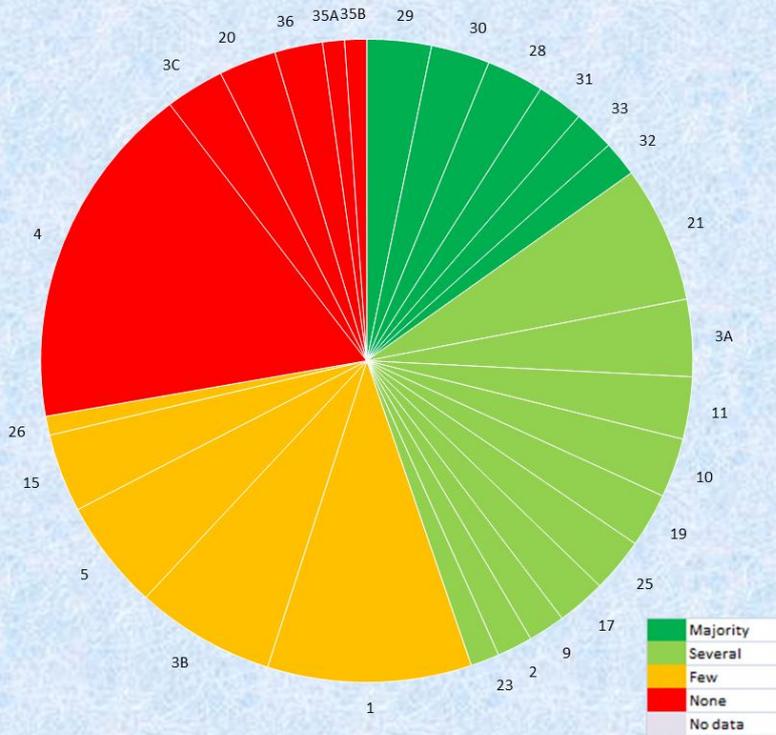
# Surveying the users

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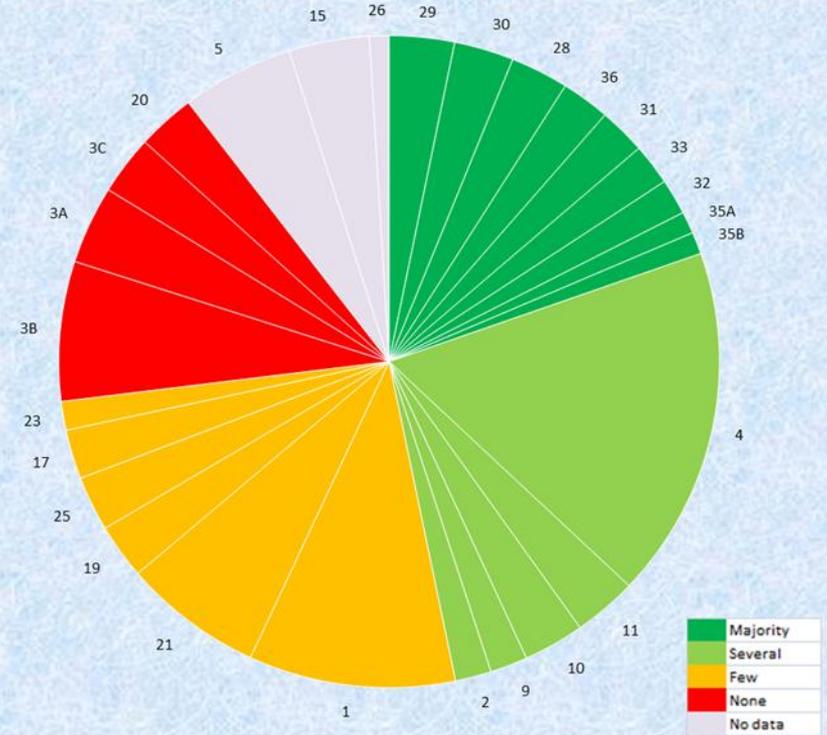
- Both during and after the REF exercise
- Feedback from meetings
- Analysis of email support queries
- Discussions with central staff during data collection
- Formal post-REF feedback exercise
- Semi-structured interviews with users from the UoAs
- Interviews with RMD and Library staff
- Interview with Vice-Principal for Research

# Survey results

Did departmental and UoA management staff use Pure?



Did other academic staff use Pure?



# Comments – use by academic staff

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All the five heads of departments, bar one, used Pure; they were all engaged

A lot of academics refused to use it and did not see it as part of their job, a perception which should be changed for the next REF

Not sure how many people use it for themselves - we've got to get out there - it will change

# Comments – use by academic staff

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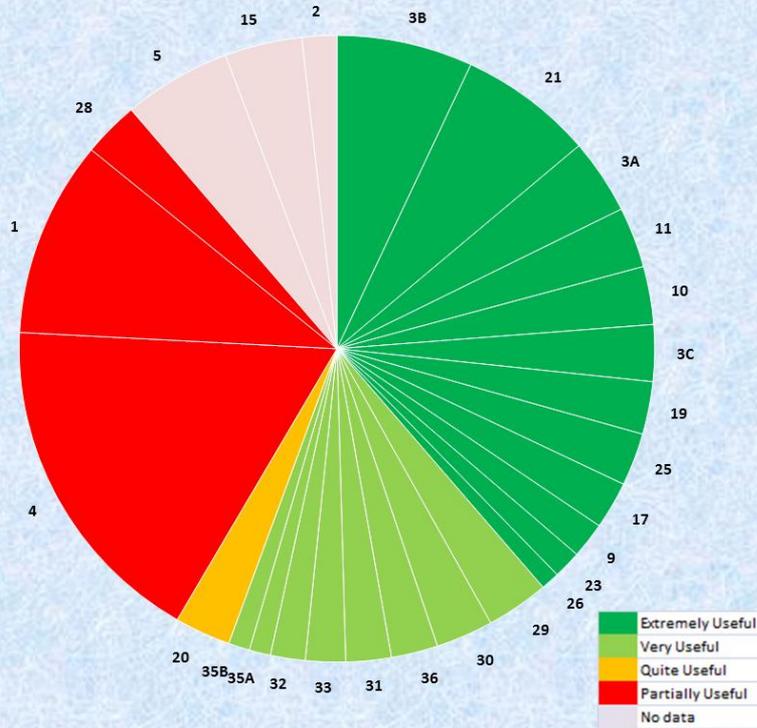
UoA leads didn't look at Pure until the dress rehearsals

Can we ask this dusty old academic to enter data please? No!

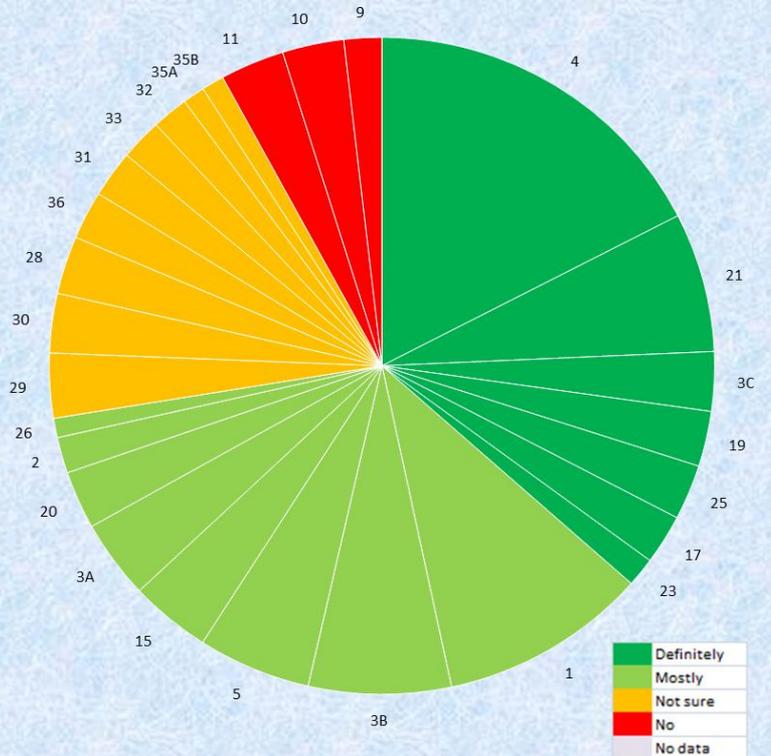
People accepted the system

# Survey results

Was Pure useful for managing the REF submission?



Was the submission improved because of Pure?



# Comments – REF submission

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The REF module in Pure was a vital tool for collecting and analysing data submitted for the REF

Makes sense to have one place that is accessible all the time

We could see when someone was doing something unreasonable; it removed a whole set of problems

# Comments – REF submission

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A lot fewer box files than last time

The REF submission was done in spite of Pure, not because of it

Academics wanted to hear that it was on Pure because they then felt safe and confident that data was in the right place

# Comments – Pure features

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The overview screens were really, really good;  
the best bit of Pure, brilliant

It was frustrating at times looking at the  
environment information

The reporting capabilities of the system  
evolved over time

# Comments – Pure features

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The value of the citation information would have been greater had it arrived earlier

We kept doing the confirmations over and over again

The upload to the submission system was much easier than last time

# Comments - Impact

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It would be good to have somewhere for the PIs to add impact themselves

We need a pin board for impact

Impact will always be a post-hoc rationalisation

# Comments – CRIS features

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Pure is useful because it's one of the few systems that pulls data in from elsewhere

One of the things I really like is the ability to “click through” all the data

There was greater transparency and clarity by using Pure

# Other experiences

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- The initial selection of papers in the larger UoA was done outside of Pure in the larger UoAs because of the late implementation of the system
- Desire from some UoAs for the ability to model the submission:
  - “one ECR is worth four Professors”
  - Fewer high quality staff (reputation) or more “average” researchers (money)
- “It’s really difficult to get as great a clarity over an individual’s performance in the private sector”
- The system was taken for granted during the dress rehearsals – when it failed late one day, no-one knew what to do!

# Conclusions

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- The use of Pure for REF has been seen as beneficial by all respondents
- Having a specific module for REF was appreciated
- Significant advantages from integration with business systems, and having a single source of “gold” data
- There are still cultural issues to overcome before academics accept the system
- However...

**“There is now sufficient self-interest to keep it going – we’ll get to 90%”  
- VP (Research)**



**Thank you**

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