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Abstract

Universities are, to a large extent, publicly funded. It is reasonable to expect that society should benefit as a result. This means that scientific research should at least have a potential societal impact. Universities and individual researchers should therefore give serious thought to the societal relevance of their research activities and report on them widely. Core questions they should be asking are: "Do we do the right things?" and "Do we do them right?". This implies that as well as indicators of scientific quality, attention should be given to indicators of societal relevance. These two considerations are examined in the context of current evaluation practices of academic research. Twelve indicators of societal relevance are proposed, focusing on both their socio-cultural and economic value. The examples given mainly concern the health and life sciences. This paper concludes with a discussion of the key challenges in evaluating the societal relevance of scientific research. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)