

Academic Analytics: Frequently Asked Questions

What is Academic Analytics?

Academic Analytics provides data, analytics, and expertise to support the research enterprise and strategic plan at universities and their component colleges, schools, institutes, and departments. Within the context of the broader national research landscape, Academic Analytics data helps administrators and faculty members create and find new research opportunities. Academic Analytics product suites — the Benchmarking Suite and the Discovery Suite — help university administrations make more objective evidence-based decisions in today's increasingly competitive environment. The Academic Analytics team of knowledgeable staff and senior advisors with backgrounds rooted in academia provides ongoing decision-support, and access to best practices. In addition, the team gives leaders access to information to design customized solutions. Our tools and data easily can be applied to strategic planning, faculty development, annual program review, honorific award nomination strategy, publication strategy, graduate placement within the academy, showcasing faculty accomplishments, identifying subject-matter expertise, targeting funding opportunities, fostering team science, analyzing collaborative networks, and helping faculty members organize their research profiles.

Who uses Academic Analytics?

Academic Analytics solutions are used by university administrators, faculty leaders, and others at research institutions. End users of our data and services include provosts, research officers, deans, department chairs, institutional research officers, and faculty members. Anyone with a role in strategy and planning will find value in a partnership with Academic Analytics, including advancement and communications offices which promote faculty achievements and honors and the research strengths of the university to the wider public and academic communities.

How are Academic Analytics products used?

Academic Analytics is part of a broad mosaic of information universities use strategically to grow research opportunities and strengthen their brand and reputation. Combined with other sources, Academic Analytics information is a key component in the academic unit review process, the planning of new centers and institutes, and highlighting existing research strengths. The main uses of Academic Analytics services and products include: strategic planning, faculty and program development, annual program review, faculty award nomination strategy, publication strategy, graduate placement within the academy, showcasing faculty accomplishments, identifying subject matter expertise, targeting funding opportunities, fostering team science, analyzing collaborative networks, and developing faculty profiles. Academic Analytics is also used to promote the university by the advancement and communications office, which mine our data to develop compelling stories about the university.

What key research activities are covered by Academic Analytics?

Our database includes information on scholarly accomplishment represented in higher education such as: book publications, journal articles, conference proceedings, citations, federal research grants, and honorific awards. Our new product suite, the Discovery Suite, offers several opportunities to integrate our research activity data with local data warehouses covering teaching activity, service, or other aspects of faculty life known locally. Such data integration facilitates a more comprehensive view of faculty engagement and workload than research activity data alone.



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What research activity is recorded by Academic Analytics?

We collect data about the scholarly activity of tenured and tenure-track faculty, or other permanent faculty for whom scholarly work is expected (e.g., “Research Professor”). Titles for these individuals are generally “Professor” (e.g., Associate, Assistant, Distinguished, Research). Academic Analytics *does not* include the following titles unless we are advised that scholarly work or doctoral student committee leadership is expected from all faculty who hold the rank: Adjunct, Adjoint, Affiliate, Visiting, Clinical, Emeritus, Postdoctoral Researcher, Lecturers, and Instructors. There are occasional exceptions. For example, an institution may indicate that emeritus professors are heavily involved in doctoral education and research.

What is our commitment to quality?

Academic Analytics data have been vetted by many of our client institutions and found to be accurate and representative of their scholars’ research contributions. Our quality assurance processes are thorough, involving both manual and computer-assisted techniques to ensure this high level of quality. Several research scholars use Academic Analytics data in their scholarly projects (outside the context of a commercial relationship) and find our data to be accurate and broad in scope. These projects have been submitted to peer reviewed journals, and Academic Analytics passed those high bars for data quality and reliability.

How are potential data discrepancies handled by Academic Analytics?

We encourage end users, research scholars, faculty members, and anyone else who uses Academic Analytics to report data discrepancies to us. In the rare event that a potential error in our data is observed within the stated scope of our coverage, Academic Analytics immediately investigates the issue, and, if necessary, corrects the data. In most cases, issues reported to us are misunderstandings about the coverage period for the particular analysis or the scope of our data collection rather than factual errors. Those who bring an issue to our attention also receive an explanation based upon our investigation.

Why do faculty sometimes have reservations about Academic Analytics?

It is rare that we hear questions about our data and tools. When faculty members do raise a question, it is almost always either: 1) a misunderstanding about what kinds of data Academic Analytics collects, or, 2) lack of clarity about how their institution’s administrators plan to use Academic Analytics data.

In the first case, an open dialogue among interested parties about what we include in our dataset – and why we include it – clears up such misunderstandings. Academic Analytics emphasizes research activity and does not capture information about other important activities in which faculty are involved, such as teaching, service and engagement. Our focus is on research only, and this is sometimes misunderstood.

In the latter situation, we encourage university administrations to be judicious in their application of data to strategy and planning and to use data positively, to highlight strengths and identify areas for investment. Academic Analytics is a small but important piece of a large mosaic of qualitative and quantitative data and other information that administrators should consider in their workflows.



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How does Academic Analytics compare to other companies in this sector?

Academic Analytics is different from other organizations. We put the scholar first – all our data aggregation processes and matching are based on the individual scholar. This focus on people helps us to ensure quality and accuracy and allows flexibility in how analyses are organized by users. As a result, data may be organized by departments, programs, schools and colleges, and even hypothetical units (e.g., what if the university created a center or institute with these faculty members participating?). This type of organization allows university administrators access to reporting and comparative analytics that aren't possible from other vendors where the journal article is the unit of record. Academic Analytics also has a greater breadth of organized faculty content than other companies; In addition to including the traditional measures of journal articles and citations, Academic Analytics also contains information about honorific awards, federal grant funding, conference proceedings, and book publications. We are also different from other organizations because we offer total customization of peer groups, time- windows, and weighting formulae for different metrics, enabling the end user to create a discipline-specific view that is tailored to their university and understanding of how the discipline is practiced locally.

Does Academic Analytics house data on humanities or performing arts?

We report the metrics that we record for humanists and performing arts faculty in our database (journal articles, conference proceedings, book publications, citations, honorific awards, and federal research grants). These data types do not appropriately capture the breadth of scholarly activity taken on by faculty in these disciplines. We encourage university administrators to be judicious in the application of research activity metrics to fields where such a limited sample of the total scholarship is included. Our new product suite, the Discovery Suite, allows our data to be augmented by the faculty members themselves to better represent their scholarship in the fine and performing arts. We strongly encourage universities to adopt the practice of augmenting data sources with local expertise in these disciplines.

Does Academic Analytics produce a measurement of journal quality?

No, our database does not contain any *a priori* tiers or weights for journals. We only include journals which assign a Digital Object Identifier to each article, and we only track journals with an explicit external peer review process. We believe that the local authorities at each university are in the best position to create rankings, tiers, and other quality metrics of journals given their knowledge of local circumstances and how the discipline is practiced and what subfields are covered at their institution. We have opted to leave this ranking process to the end user, including discipline specific rates of citation for each journal title, rather than to impose our own ranking of journals.



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