

What does research excellence mean? How is it measured? When do we know that we have reached the required standard? These are difficult questions, but if the excellence agenda is to be taken seriously, they must be asked — even if they cannot be adequately answered.

A paper in Science and Public Policy makes the latest attempt to ask — and indeed answer — them (F. Ferretti et al. Sci. Publ. Pol. <http://doi.org/ckpg> , 2018). The authors interview a dozen experts — from policy wonks to researchers — about excellence and quickly reach two points of consensus. First, the idea of excellence as a measure of research quality makes many people uncomfortable. And second, these people — despite their discomfort — cannot suggest anything better, given that science and scientists must meet political demands of accountability and assessment. (Fonte: www.nature.com

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