

**Paper#:** K089

## **Management control systems and research management within universities**

**Gloria Agyemang**

Royal Holloway University of London  
gloria.agyemang@rhul.ac.uk

**Jane Broadbent**

Royal Holloway University of London  
jane.broadbent@rhul.ac.uk

### **ABSTRACT**

Management Control Systems are intended to affect behaviour of people within organisations in order to ensure that particular aims and objectives are achieved. This paper considers the Management Control Systems that are developed for the management of research within universities. A key purpose is to explore the internal control systems developed to manage research within university UK Business and Management Schools, in response to externally imposed Management Control Systems. The paper considers the Research Excellence Framework and the previous Research Assessment Exercises as externally imposed Management Control Systems and examines university organisational reactions to this.

The paper builds on previous literature that has identified perverse outcomes from the use of performance management systems (a particular form of management control) within organisations. It analyses the resistance and coping strategies that result from the imposition of a measurement system. In particular, the paper considers the extent to which academics have developed their own measurement strategies and raises the possibility that these contribute to even greater control over individual academics. The paper draws on Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic violence" to demonstrate how individual attitudes and behaviour may contribute to the use of dysfunctional management control systems.

The paper offers a research agenda for empirically investigating these issues further.

**Keywords:** management control systems, performance management systems, universities, research, Research Excellence Framework