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Faculty Appraisal, Metric Governance, and Dehumanisation in Higher Education

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Abstract

This paper examines faculty appraisal systems in higher education as forms of metric governance that operate through socio-technical assemblages rather than neutral evaluative tools. Drawing on a qualitative study of faculty experiences in a Gulf-region higher education context, the analysis reconceptualises student evaluations and managerial appraisals as governing technologies that redistribute power, shape academic labour, and produce dehumanising effects. Rather than locating harm in individual actors, the study foregrounds how metricised appraisal regimes enact performative logics that render faculty visible, comparable, and governable, while simultaneously eroding professional autonomy, recognition, and motivation. Interview data reveal how appraisal metrics function as non-human actors within institutional assemblages, privileging calculability, compliance, and managerial discretion over pedagogical judgement and academic expertise. The paper contributes to posthuman and critical governance debates by theorising faculty appraisal as a mechanism of metric governance that reconfigures academic work, subjectivity, and value within contemporary higher education systems.

Keywords: Dehumanisation, Faculty Appraisal, Higher Education, Metric Governance, Posthumanism.

Introduction

Across contemporary higher education systems, faculty appraisal has become a routine mechanism for assessing teaching quality, professional conduct and institutional alignment. Standard appraisal instruments include student evaluation surveys, managerial observations, performance appraisal forms, and portfolio-based reporting of goals and outcomes. These instruments are frequently linked to consequential decisions regarding contract renewal, promotion, and termination, positioning appraisal as a high-stakes process rather than a neutral evaluative practice. In many institutional contexts, including higher education institutions in the Gulf region, faculty appraisal is conducted on a semesterly or annual basis. It relies heavily on quantified performance indicators derived from both student feedback and managerial assessment.

While such appraisal systems are often justified in terms of accountability, quality assurance, and student satisfaction, critical scholarship has shown that they also function as technologies that structure visibility, comparison, and judgment within academic work (Ball, 2003; Espeland & Stevens, 2008; Manes-Rossi et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2024). Faculty members are rendered legible through scores, ratings, and standardised descriptors that translate complex pedagogical practices into calculable outputs. Classroom observations, student evaluation surveys, and performance appraisal forms do not merely record teaching activity; they actively participate in

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defining what counts as effective teaching, acceptable conduct, and institutional value. As a result, appraisal operates not only as an evaluative mechanism but as a mode of governance that shapes academic labour through processes of metricisation and comparison.

Existing scholarship has documented faculty concerns regarding the opacity, subjectivity, and perceived unfairness of student evaluations and managerial appraisals (Spooren, Brockx & Mortelmans, 2013; Schaerer et al., 2018; Cook et al., 2021; Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2021; Tran et al., 2021; Adams et al., 2022; Choshi et al., 2023; Tarigan et al., 2023) extensively. Scores generated by these systems are often perceived as difficult to interpret, weakly aligned with pedagogical judgement, and disproportionately influential in career-related decisions. Rather than offering transparent developmental feedback, appraisal metrics frequently condense diverse forms of academic work into a single numerical outcome, intensifying anxiety, compliance, and strategic self-presentation among faculty. These dynamics suggest that appraisal systems exert power not primarily through individual actors, but through the calculative logics embedded within evaluative infrastructures.

This paper approaches faculty appraisal through a posthuman lens, conceptualising metricised evaluation systems as socio-technical assemblages that redistribute agency away from individuals and toward non-human elements such as forms, surveys, scoring rubrics, and performance indicators (Orlikowski, 2007; Braidotti, 2019). From this perspective, dehumanisation is not understood as the result of intentional mistreatment or individual bias, but as a systemic effect of governance through metrics, where professional judgement, relational teaching practices, and contextual knowledge are subordinated to comparability and calculability. Drawing on qualitative interview data from higher education faculty in the Gulf region, the study examines how appraisal metrics operate as governing technologies that shape academic work, subjectivity, and value within contemporary higher education.

2. Faculty Appraisal as Metric Governance

Rather than approaching faculty appraisal as a matter of individual perception or managerial practice, this paper treats appraisal systems as socio-technical arrangements through which academic work is rendered visible, comparable, and governable. Student evaluation surveys, managerial appraisals, and performance forms are not understood as neutral instruments for assessing teaching effectiveness, but as components of calculative infrastructures that organise professional value through numerical abstraction and comparison (Power, 1997; Miller, 2004). Within such systems, decisions concerning contract renewal, promotion, and termination are mediated by scores, categories, and performance indicators whose effects exceed the intentions of any single actor.

From this perspective, power within appraisal processes does not reside primarily in students or managers, but in the audit architectures that translate pedagogical labour into standardised representations. Research on audit culture has demonstrated how such architectures privilege commensurability, transparency, and control, often at the expense of contextual judgement and professional discretion (Shore, 2008; Strathern, 2000). As appraisal metrics circulate through institutional routines, they reshape academic conduct by fostering self-monitoring, anticipatory compliance, and strategic alignment with measurable criteria, while simultaneously producing uncertainty about how professional value is recognised.

However, while audit-culture scholarship has been instrumental in revealing how quantification restructures professional life, it has often retained an implicitly human-centred analytic focus, emphasising how individuals respond to, resist, or internalise evaluative regimes. This paper extends that body of work by shifting attention from human responses to the governing capacity of metrics themselves. In doing so, it draws a distinction between audit culture as a descriptive account of accountability regimes, metric governance as a mode of power enacted through calculative practices, and posthuman assemblage as an analytic framework for understanding how governance is produced through distributed agency.

Metric governance, as used in this paper, refers to the process by which metrics do not merely measure academic activity but actively participate in governing it. Appraisal indicators function as decision-making devices that stabilise judgement across contexts, compress complexity into administratively actionable forms, and align professional conduct with institutional priorities. A posthuman assemblage perspective further clarifies that such governance is not imposed solely by institutional actors but emerges through interactions among human agents and non-human elements, including surveys, scoring rubrics, databases, and procedural templates (Latour, 2005).

By adopting a posthuman analytic orientation, this paper moves beyond humanist critiques of appraisal that focus on bias, unfairness, or managerial misuse. While such critiques remain important, they risk locating the problem primarily in individual intent or organisational culture. A posthuman perspective instead foregrounds how dehumanisation emerges systemically through governance by numbers, as professional judgement, relational pedagogical work, and contextual knowledge are subordinated to calculability and comparability (Strathern, 2000; Braidotti, 2013). Reinterpreting faculty interview data through this lens enables the study to demonstrate how appraisal systems operate as governing technologies that reshape academic work and institutional value within contemporary higher education.

3. Study Context and Analytical Approach

This study is situated within higher education institutions in the Gulf region, where faculty appraisal systems play a central role in decisions concerning contract renewal, promotion, and continued employment. Across these institutional contexts, faculty appraisal typically involves a combination of student evaluation surveys, managerial classroom observations, and annual or semester-based performance appraisal forms. These evaluative procedures are embedded within routine institutional cycles and are closely tied to employment security and career progression.

The empirical material for this study consists of qualitative interview data generated with higher education faculty members working across multiple universities in the region. Participants were selected based on their sustained engagement with institutional appraisal processes and their experience of student evaluations and managerial review practices. Interviews focused on participants' encounters with appraisal systems, the perceived consequences of evaluative procedures for academic work, and how appraisal outcomes shaped professional trajectories. All interviews were conducted in English, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim.

Rather than treating interview accounts as expressions of individual attitudes or subjective perception, this paper adopts an interpretive, posthuman analytic orientation. From this

perspective, appraisal systems are approached as socio-technical arrangements through which governance is enacted in practice. Interview data are analysed not to recover authentic voice or lived experience in a phenomenological sense, but to trace how evaluative infrastructures organise conduct, redistribute agency, and stabilise institutional judgements. Faculty accounts are therefore read as sites where appraisal systems become visible in operation, rather than as stand-alone narratives of personal grievance or satisfaction.

Analytically, the study attends to how appraisal metrics, such as numerical student ratings, categorical performance bands, and standardised observation criteria, function as mediating devices that translate pedagogical activity into administratively actionable forms. This approach foregrounds the material and procedural dimensions of governance, recognising that documents, surveys, and performance forms actively shape professional value and institutional decision-making. In doing so, the analysis aligns with posthuman scholarship that emphasises the distributed nature of agency across human and non-human elements within organisational systems.

This orientation enables the paper to examine faculty appraisal as a form of metric governance, in which evaluative power is exercised through routine institutional practices rather than through overt managerial control. By situating the empirical material within this analytic frame, the study focuses on the systemic effects of appraisal infrastructures, such as standardisation, comparability, and precarity, while avoiding individualised or moralising explanations. The following section presents the empirical findings, demonstrating how appraisal metrics operate in practice and how their effects are experienced within everyday academic work.

4. Findings: Appraisal Metrics at Work

This section presents the empirical findings of the study, interpreted through a posthuman analytic orientation that treats faculty appraisal as a metricised socio-technical assemblage rather than a neutral evaluative procedure. Across interviews, participants described appraisal as operating through devices such as student evaluation surveys, managerial observation records, and annual performance forms that render academic work legible through numerical and categorical outputs. These outputs then circulate through institutional decision processes, enabling comparison, standardisation, and intervention. In line with scholarship on quantification and audit culture, the findings show that appraisal metrics do not simply represent teaching; they reorganise what becomes visible, actionable, and professionally consequential (Espeland & Stevens, 2008; Shore & Wright, 2015).

4.1 Rendering Academic Work Visible and Comparable

Participants consistently described faculty appraisal processes as mechanisms that compress complex academic labour into simplified and often distorted representations. Student evaluation scores and formal appraisal categories were experienced as the primary means through which teaching was rendered institutionally visible, frequently displacing pedagogical judgement and professional knowledge. *Conal* articulated this structural misalignment succinctly, observing that “there is a huge disconnect between teachers and management.” This disconnect was not framed as a failure of communication between individuals, but as a consequence of how appraisal systems translate teaching into administratively legible forms.

Participants emphasised that what becomes visible through appraisal is not teaching as enacted in classrooms but teaching as captured through numerical traces and externalised accounts. *Trish* highlighted how professional standing was shaped by indirect reputational signals rather than sustained engagement with pedagogical practice, noting the importance of “how students talk about you in public, whether students are complaining or not about you to the administration.” In this configuration, institutional knowledge of teaching is produced through circulation, complaints, ratings, and summaries, rather than through situated pedagogical understanding.

The emphasis on visibility was repeatedly linked to institutional comparability. Appraisal metrics enabled diverse teaching practices to be aligned within shared performance frameworks, allowing faculty to be ranked, monitored, and differentiated. Participants described how this process prioritised what could be standardised across staff and courses, while marginalising forms of academic labour that were relational, contextual, or difficult to quantify. Teaching effectiveness, in this sense, became less about pedagogical quality and more about how healthy practice could be rendered legible within institutional systems.

Several participants suggested that visibility itself had become a governing objective. Being seen to perform well within appraisal frameworks mattered more than pedagogical experimentation or responsiveness to student learning needs. As a result, appraisal did not merely document teaching but actively shaped how it was enacted. Faculty described adapting their practices to ensure favourable representation within evaluative systems, reinforcing the dominance of what could be measured over what could be meaningfully taught.

These accounts indicate that appraisal systems operate through commensurability: heterogeneous academic practices are reduced to comparable indicators that stabilise judgment across contexts. Visibility is therefore not neutral but productive, determining which aspects of academic labour are recognised, rewarded, or disregarded. In rendering teaching visible through metrics, appraisal systems simultaneously obscure the complexity of pedagogical work, positioning faculty within evaluative hierarchies that privilege calculability over professional judgement.

4.2 Student Evaluations as Calculative Devices and Anticipatory Governance

Student evaluation surveys occupied a central position in participants’ accounts of faculty appraisal, not merely as feedback mechanisms but as instruments that shaped teaching practice before formal evaluation. Participants consistently described student evaluations as high-stakes indicators whose consequences extended beyond pedagogical reflection to employment security and professional standing. *Michael* captured this logic directly, stating, “They’re the customers, we have to keep them happy. Therefore, we need to have good reviews.” This framing positions student evaluations not as retrospective assessments of learning, but as anticipatory signals around which teaching practices are strategically organised.

Participants described how the prospect of evaluation structured conduct before any survey was completed. Teaching was adjusted pre-emptively to anticipate how students might respond to evaluative questions, encouraging caution, risk avoidance, and strategic alignment with perceived student expectations. In this sense, appraisal operates temporally: governance is enacted not only through the consequences attached to past scores, but through the anticipation

of future measurement. Faculty described calibrating workload, assessment strictness, and classroom interaction in ways designed to minimise evaluative risk rather than maximise pedagogical challenge.

This anticipatory dynamic reflects a shift in the function of evaluation from developmental feedback to regulatory governance. Rather than supporting reflective teaching improvement, student evaluations were experienced as instruments that stabilised acceptable conduct by signalling the boundaries of institutional tolerance. Participants indicated that the authority of these evaluations derived less from their accuracy than from their institutional consequences. Once embedded within appraisal workflows, student ratings acquired governing force regardless of their methodological limitations.

Several participants questioned the epistemic reliability of student evaluation instruments themselves. *Nina* noted that students often “never really understand or pay attention to the questions,” describing survey completion as a procedural obligation rather than a reflective act. Despite this, the aggregated outcomes of these surveys were treated as authoritative indicators of teaching quality. This disconnect between student engagement and institutional reliance highlights how metric governance can operate independently of interpretive meaning. What matters is not the depth of evaluative insight, but the production of usable data that can circulate within appraisal systems.

Participants further described how student evaluations triggered downstream governance effects. *John* explained that unfavourable results initiated compulsory documentation and explanation, noting that faculty were “forced to write a whole essay on why they got such bad reviews.” Here, the evaluation instrument functions as the first step in a regulatory sequence: numerical outputs generate justificatory labour, disciplinary scrutiny, and heightened managerial oversight. Student evaluations thus act as initiating devices within a broader governance circuit, translating student sentiment into administrative action.

Taken together, these accounts illustrate how student evaluations function as non-human actors within appraisal assemblages. They do not simply record teaching performance but actively organise conduct by shaping expectations, constraining pedagogical choice, and aligning academic labour with institutional priorities. Through anticipatory governance, evaluation metrics exert influence before they are even deployed, reinforcing compliance and self-regulation as routine features of scholarly work.

4.3 Managerial Appraisal as Translation

Participants’ accounts highlighted managerial appraisal as a crucial translation layer within the broader appraisal assemblage. While student evaluations generated numerical indicators of teaching performance, it was through managerial interpretation that these indicators were consolidated, contextualised, and rendered institutionally actionable. Appraisal outcomes were therefore not the direct product of metrics alone, but of how those metrics were interpreted, prioritised, and aligned with organisational expectations.

Participants described managerial appraisal as a process in which disparate evaluative inputs, student ratings, classroom observations, and portfolio documentation were brought together into

a single performance narrative. This consolidation involved translating heterogeneous forms of academic activity into standardised categories that could support administrative decision-making. Metrics did not speak for themselves; they required interpretive work to become decisions about contract renewal, promotion, or remediation. It is in this translation that governance was enacted.

Several participants indicated that this interpretive layer was shaped by relational proximity and discretionary judgment. *Mindy* noted that appraisal outcomes were influenced by “how close you are to the supervisor,” as well as shared background and familiarity. Such accounts suggest that managerial appraisal does not eliminate subjectivity but redistributes it. Metrics create an appearance of objectivity while still requiring human mediation to determine how scores are read, weighted, and operationalised.

Importantly, participants did not frame these dynamics primarily as personal grievances against individual managers. Instead, they described managerial discretion as structurally embedded in appraisal systems that require interpretation to function. *Crishell* captured this as a systemic condition rather than an interpersonal conflict, calling for an end to the evaluative regime itself: “end this power game.” The phrasing signals that appraisal is experienced as a repeated institutional process rather than an isolated exercise of authority.

Viewed through this analytic lens, managerial appraisal operates as a governing technology that stabilises institutional judgement through routine procedures rather than overt coercion, a dynamic characteristic of audit cultures in which accountability is produced through abstraction, comparison, and standardisation (Strathern, 2000). Translation is central to this process. Numerical indicators are transformed into performance classifications, developmental narratives, and employment decisions through standardised forms and procedural expectations. Governance is thus exercised not through direct managerial control, but through the routinised interpretation of metrics that appear neutral while carrying significant consequences.

By foregrounding managerial appraisal as translation, this analysis shows how power operates through the interaction of metrics and discretion. Appraisal systems do not replace human judgement; they reorganise it, embedding interpretive authority within calculative frameworks that prioritise consistency, defensibility, and institutional alignment. In doing so, managerial appraisal contributes to the governance of academic labour by converting complex professional activity into administratively legible outcomes.

4.4 Standardisation, Compliance, and the Narrowing of Pedagogical Autonomy

A further pattern in the data concerns the standardising pressures that accompany metric governance. *Abigail* described institutional standardisation as a system requirement: “everybody across the system has to use the same materials, in the same way, at the same time.” This statement illustrates how appraisal is often entangled with compliance expectations, alignment with standard templates, shared pacing, and uniform delivery, because standardisation makes performance easier to compare and audit.

Such standardisation can narrow professional discretion by aligning “effective teaching” with institutional sameness rather than context-sensitive judgement. In this sense, appraisal operates

not only through evaluation at the end of a cycle but through the ongoing structuring of acceptable practice. These effects are consistent with broader analyses of how audit and accountability systems produce compliance-oriented subjectivities and risk-averse professional cultures (Ball, 2015; Shore & Wright, 2015).

Participants' comments indicate that the pressure to maintain favourable appraisal outcomes shapes everyday academic conduct, what can be taught, how strictly it can be assessed, and how far pedagogical experimentation is considered safe. Even where faculty disagree with the system, their accounts suggest they adapt to it because the costs of misalignment are real and institutionalised.

4.5 Dehumanisation as a Systemic Effect of Metric Governance

Across interviews, dehumanisation was not described primarily as overt mistreatment or interpersonal hostility. Instead, it emerged as a gradual effect of being reduced to institutional representations that failed to capture the complexity of professional academic labour. *Nina's* assessment of appraisal outcomes illustrates this disjunction clearly: "Reflects my true abilities? No, it does not just reflect my true ability." This statement points to a structural condition in which appraisal systems do not simply assess ability but actively define what counts as ability through the categories, indicators, and metrics they institutionalise.

Other participants expressed scepticism toward student evaluations as legitimate measures of pedagogical quality. *James's* comment, "students have no idea of what they are talking about," is analytically relevant not as a critique of students themselves, but as evidence of a perceived mismatch between pedagogical expertise and the authority accorded to student ratings within institutional decision-making systems. When such ratings function as decisive signals in renewal and promotion processes, professional judgement is subordinated to calculative outcomes, regardless of their pedagogical validity.

Amy's observation that "university cares about students more than they care about me" captures the systemic prioritisation embedded within appraisal assemblages. Here, evaluative infrastructures align institutional value with satisfaction, reputation, and risk management, positioning faculty as administratively manageable units rather than as professional agents. In audit-culture terms, this reflects governance through numbers, whereby institutions privilege what can be measured, compared, and defended administratively, even when doing so abstracts relational, pedagogical, and intellectual labour into simplified performance profiles (Espeland & Stevens, 2008; Strathern, 2000).

Taken together, these accounts indicate that dehumanisation is best understood not as the outcome of individual bias or interpersonal hostility, but as an emergent systemic effect of metricised appraisal. As Guthrie et al. (2019) demonstrate in their analysis of performance management systems, once metrics are embedded within organisational workflows, they begin to reorganise professional value by privileging calculability, comparability, and administrative defensibility. Similar dynamics have been identified in higher education contexts, where evaluative infrastructures reshape academic recognition and autonomy through routine metricisation rather than overt managerial intervention (Mula-Falcón & Caballero, 2023).

Recent research further suggests that such systems exert durable effects on academic subjectivity by normalising self-monitoring, compliance, and strategic alignment with measurable criteria (Demoulin & Stinglhamber, 2024). In this sense, appraisal metrics do not merely assess performance retrospectively but actively structure what forms of academic labour become visible, valued, and consequential over time. As Oancea (2019) and Gore et al. (2022) similarly argue, the cumulative effect of metric governance is a reconfiguration of professional identity in which recognition and security are increasingly tied to abstracted indicators rather than contextual judgement or pedagogical meaning.

5. Discussion: Dehumanisation Through Metric Governance

This paper has conceptualised faculty appraisal not as a neutral evaluative practice but as a form of metric governance enacted through socio-technical assemblages. The findings show that appraisal metrics, particularly student evaluation scores and managerial performance ratings, operate as governing technologies that reorganise academic work, redistribute agency, and normalise dehumanising effects as routine institutional outcomes. This understanding aligns with early work on audit cultures, where evaluation is shown to function less as measurement and more as a mode of governance that reshapes professional judgement and organisational priorities (Strathern, 2000; Power, 1997).

5.1 From Evaluation to Governance

Rather than simply assessing teaching quality, faculty appraisal systems in this study functioned as mechanisms for structuring visibility, comparability, and accountability. As Miller and Rose (2008) argue, calculative practices are central to contemporary governance precisely because they translate complex activities into administratively actionable forms. In the present study, appraisal metrics did not merely reflect teaching performance; they actively shaped what counted as legitimate academic work by privileging what could be standardised, recorded, and defended.

This dynamic resonates with critical scholarship on higher education accountability, which has documented how performance management systems align academic labour with institutional priorities such as reputational security, risk management, and student satisfaction (Deem et al., 2007; Ball, 2012). Faculty appraisal, when embedded within these logics, becomes a governing technology that disciplines practice indirectly, encouraging alignment through metrics rather than through explicit managerial control.

5.2 Distributed Agency and Appraisal Assemblages

A posthuman reading of the findings foregrounds the distributed nature of agency within appraisal systems. Power does not reside solely with managers or students but emerges through interactions among human actors and non-human elements such as surveys, scoring rubrics, appraisal forms, and institutional procedures. Fenwick and Edwards (2010) describe such arrangements as sociomaterial assemblages in which agency is an emergent property of relations rather than an attribute of individuals.

Understanding appraisal in this way helps explain why faculty frequently experience evaluative outcomes as opaque and difficult to contest. Metrics acquire authority not because they are accurate representations of teaching, but because they are embedded in organisational workflows that trigger consequences. As Orlikowski (2007) notes in her analysis of sociomaterial practices,

technologies participate in organising action by shaping what can be seen, said, and acted upon. In faculty appraisal, numerical indicators become decision-making devices that stabilise judgment across time and contexts.

5.3 Dehumanisation as a Systemic Effect

Within these assemblages, dehumanisation emerges not as intentional mistreatment but as a systemic effect of abstraction and reduction (Haslam & Loughnan, 2014). Faculty described being rendered visible primarily through numerical scores and categorical judgements that failed to capture the relational and intellectual dimensions of their work. Espeland and Stevens (2008) characterise this process as one in which quantification produces commensurability by stripping away context, thereby narrowing the terms through which value is recognised.

This form of dehumanisation does not eliminate ethical concern; rather, it reorganises care and recognition within calculative systems. Ball (2015) has argued that metricised governance produces symbolic violence by redefining professional worth in terms of performance indicators that faculty must continually manage. The findings of this study echo this critique, showing how appraisal metrics position faculty as governable units of performance rather than as professional agents exercising contextual judgement.

5.4 Implications for Higher Education Governance

By framing faculty appraisal as metric governance, this paper contributes to posthuman and critical debates on academic labour and accountability in higher education. Reform efforts that focus narrowly on improving evaluation instruments or reducing bias risk, leaving intact the underlying calculative logic that structures appraisal systems. As Biesta (2015) cautions, addressing the consequences of measurement without questioning its dominance as a mode of valuation limits the possibility of meaningful change.

A posthuman perspective instead draws attention to the infrastructures through which evaluation is enacted and the values they institutionalise. Recognising appraisal as a governing technology opens space for alternative forms of evaluation that foreground professional judgement, contextual understanding, and relational pedagogy without defaulting to metric abstraction. Without such a shift, appraisal systems are likely to continue producing dehumanising effects as routine outcomes of governance through numbers.

5.5 Metric Governance and the Posthuman Subject

Beyond documenting the dehumanising effects of appraisal systems, this analysis contributes to posthuman debates in education by foregrounding how metric governance participates in the production of academic subjectivity. Faculty appraisal does not merely constrain pre-existing professional identities; it actively configures what it means to be a recognisable academic subject within contemporary higher education. Through repeated cycles of evaluation, comparison, and documentation, appraisal systems stabilise a version of the academic that is legible primarily through calculable performance.

From this perspective, faculty subjectivity is shaped through ongoing processes of subjectification embedded within evaluative infrastructures. Metrics, surveys, and performance categories operate as *dispositifs*, that is, heterogeneous arrangements of practices, discourses, and

technologies, that invite faculty to understand themselves in relation to numerical thresholds, benchmarks, and comparative rankings. Professional worth becomes articulated through scores, averages, and developmental narratives that align academic identity with institutional priorities of accountability and defensibility. As Miller and Rose (2008) argue, such calculative practices do not simply measure subjects; they help constitute them by defining the terms under which conduct is rendered knowable and governable.

A posthuman analytic lens further clarifies that this subject formation is not reducible to individual internalisation or managerial discipline. Instead, subjectivity emerges through distributed relations among human actors and non-human elements, including evaluation instruments, databases, and procedural routines (Latour, 2005; Orlikowski, 2007; Braidotti, 2016; Falcon, 2022). Faculty become calculable subjects not because they choose to conform, but because appraisal assemblages continuously reconfigure the conditions under which academic work is recognised and valued.

This analysis, therefore, extends posthuman scholarship in education by demonstrating how governance through metrics produces a particular academic subject: one oriented toward visibility, comparability, and anticipatory self-regulation. In doing so, it shifts attention from resistance or compliance at the level of individual agency to the systemic production of subjectivity within evaluative regimes. Such a move underscores the need for posthuman critiques of education to engage not only with dehumanisation as an outcome, but with the calculative processes through which professional subjects are continually made and remade (Braidotti, 2019).

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined faculty appraisal in higher education as a form of metric governance, arguing that appraisal systems operate not merely as evaluative instruments but as socio-technical arrangements that actively govern academic work. Drawing on qualitative interview data from higher education institutions in the Gulf region, the study has shown how student evaluations, managerial appraisal procedures, and performance metrics function as governing technologies that reorganise visibility, accountability, and professional value within academic labour.

By adopting a posthuman analytic orientation, the paper has shifted attention away from individual intent, bias, or managerial misconduct and toward the systemic effects produced by metricised appraisal infrastructures. Faculty experiences of insecurity, compliance, strategic self-monitoring, and demotivation emerged not as isolated grievances but as routine outcomes of evaluative systems that privilege calculability, comparability, and administrative defensibility. Dehumanisation, in this sense, was not the result of overt hostility but an emergent consequence of governance through numbers, in which professional judgement and relational pedagogical labour were increasingly subordinated to standardised indicators.

Conceptualising appraisal as metric governance contributes to posthuman and critical governance debates by foregrounding the role of non-human actors, such as surveys, forms, scoring rubrics, databases, and procedural routines, in shaping academic subjectivity and organisational decision-making. This perspective complicates human-centred accounts of power by demonstrating how governance is enacted through distributed assemblages rather than through direct managerial

control or individualised acts of authority. Importantly, it shows how appraisal systems do not merely constrain academic subjects but are actively constituted through them, as professional worth becomes intelligible primarily through calculative representations.

The analysis also carries implications for ongoing discussions about reforming evaluation practices in higher education. Efforts to improve appraisal systems by refining instruments, increasing transparency, or addressing bias may offer limited relief if the underlying logic of metric governance remains intact. Without interrogating how calculative infrastructures structure recognition, accountability, and consequence, such reforms risk reproducing the very conditions that generate dehumanising effects. A posthuman perspective instead invites institutions to reflect critically on how appraisal systems shape what is valued, rewarded, and rendered consequential, and to consider alternative evaluative arrangements that foreground contextual judgement, pedagogical meaning, and relational accountability.

While this study is situated within a specific regional context, the dynamics it identifies resonate with broader transformations in higher education governance globally. Future research may extend this analysis by examining how metric governance operates across different institutional settings, disciplines, or national systems, or by exploring how alternative evaluative practices interrupt the dominance of calculative regimes. By reframing faculty appraisal as a governing technology rather than a neutral assessment tool, this paper contributes to posthuman scholarship by demonstrating that evaluation infrastructures do not simply assess academic work but actively shape the conditions, possibilities, and limits of contemporary academic life.

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