Morressier step-up report

May 2020

'Step up' is a health check programme for start-ups and has been developed by Jisc in consultation with the sector and in partnership with Emerge Education. The health check aims to scrutinise start-ups against key sector requirements, to provide institutions with a certain level of assurance when they are considering engaging with these new enterprises. The accreditations awarded following the vetting process form general information only and are not intended to amount to advice on which an institution should solely rely.

Sami Benchekroun, Co-founder and Managing Director of Morressier, provides an overview of the solution and the problem it addresses.

Morressier is the world's leading platform for early-stage research, providing conference content management tools, powerful data and analytics, and prescient insights into tomorrow's scientific breakthroughs.

Problem and Solution

Conferences play an essential role in the scientific ecosystem as the place where research is first shared and where scientists discover the latest breakthroughs in their fields. They are particularly important for early-career researchers, who use the events to present and discuss their ideas and to start building a professional reputation among their peers. For those researchers, being able to maximise the exposure of their conference content can provide a major career boost.

However, as is the case for much of the early research process, conference content is traditionally kept offline and hidden from the wider scholarly ecosystem, dramatically slowing down scientific progress. By not sharing posters, presentations, and conference proceedings in a structured way, universities, societies, and other research organisations miss out on public and private partnership opportunities. On top of this, current research information systems do not cover the entire research process, in particular early-stage findings, resulting in major blind spots.

Morressier builds the bridge between academic conferences and publishing research organisations. Over the past six years, Morressier's powerful platform and digital enhancement services have helped institutions and societies to host, share, integrate, and increase the recognition of their early-stage research.

Assessment summary table

Criteria		Assessed as
Legal requirements	Company registration	✔
	Insurance	✔
	GDPR	✔
Business proposition and solution	Articulated problem and solution	✔
	Working product	✔
	Existing implementations	✔
	Designed to meet user requirements and evidence of impact/efficacy	✔
	Consistent and validated pricing model	✔
	Financial track record and longevity	✔
Team and capacity	Background and skills	✔
✔	Development planning	✔
	Scalability	✔
Data and information security	Minimum technical requirements	✔
✔	Advanced technical requirements	✔[1]
	Product integration	✔
✔[2]	Good practice and accessibility	✔[2]

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[1] The company has not carried out external penetration testing, but has committed to do so if required by a customer.
[2] Morressier have a plan in place to meet requirements within the required timescales.

Assessment details

Legal requirements		
Legal requirements	The company is legally established to trade within the UK.	✓
Insurance	The company has professional and employee's liability insurance.	✓
GDPR compliance	There is a documented process to keep records in compliance with GDPR and a published privacy policy. Staff are trained on GDPR and updated as part of an ongoing staff training programme.	✓

Business proposition and solution			
Articulated problem and solution	There is a clear definition of the strategic problem addressed by the solution. Its relevance to the UK HE/FE sector is validated through publications, research, government policy, or evidence of market demand.	Institutions need to recruit the best research talent, help their early-career researchers gain recognition and make progress with their careers, as well as host impactful virtual or hybrid conferences. Finally, they need to provide their researchers with easy access to the latest findings in their field. Morressier makes institutions' previously hidden research discoverable to a global audience of commercial partners and publishers. This helps early-career researchers to get in front of the right publishing partners, ensuring they are discovered as early in the research process as possible. Surfacing conference content also acts as a marketing tool to showcase the science that is happening at an institution at any one point in time and attract the best new talent. Morressier also helps researchers discover the conference findings without needing to travel there in person, resulting in savings in time and expense. Finally, universities benefit from the ability to generate sustaining revenue streams by potentially commercializing their conference content through optional access and sponsorship models. The existence of the problem has been validated through media materials and the company's own customer research.	✓
Working product	The company can provide institutions with a working product ready for use.	There is a working product, with video walkthroughs and a demo login available.	✓

Existing implementations	The product has been used and evaluated through existing implementations, with success metrics defined and tracked consistently.	The purpose of the product is to help customers manage and disseminate early-stage research and to make relevant findings discoverable to their researchers. The metrics used to track implementation success focus on usage and traffic from institutions or societies (including number of logins, number of search queries, impressions, clicks, unique views and number of documents uploaded and shared). Qualitative metrics are used to ensure the content is relevant to users by tracking search keywords and most viewed topics and categories.	✓
Designed to meet user requirements and evidence of impact/efficacy	The product has been designed with user engagement in mind and the company is able to define and track successful use for reporting over the course of/at the end of implementation. The company's solution helps address individual institutional priorities and requirements and there is demonstrable impact of the solution on the problem.	Over the course of implementation, the following user engagement metrics are tracked to ensure the product continues to meet user needs: • Conference content metrics (e.g. interactions with conference abstracts, posters, presentations, and conference proceedings before, during and after the event) to track the performance and reach of their conference. These metrics are tracked using Looker, a data management platform. • After every conference, customers are sent a Typeform survey with 10 questions (quantitative and qualitative) around their experience, areas for improvement and suggestions for future product features. Feedback from the form and conversations with customers feeds into product development. • Quality of support is tracked using Intercom with over 98% of customers giving a 'happy' or 'very happy' rating of the service. Morressier works with a pool of researchers to interview them on their work, goals and blockers and to do concept tests with them for new products, including both current users and non-users. The group is used to test new features and do usability testing on the existing product. Summaries of usability testing insights are shared with the whole Morressier team to ensure everyone is informed on product feedback	✓
Consistent and validated pricing model	The company has a clear pricing strategy and there is a consistent process in place for institutions wishing to buy and/or implement the product. The pricing model (if paid product) has been validated through existing customers (willingness to pay).	Different modules within the product offering have consistent pricing tiers based on content volume (number of documents processed), with one-time meeting or annual portfolio fees. There is a clear and well-documented process to establish the appropriate pricing tier and onboard customers. More custom integrations may require a one-time development fee. All support & ongoing maintenance is included in standard pricing. This pricing model has been validated through existing customers in the UK and elsewhere.	✓

| Financial track record and longevity | The company has a financial track record of at least three years and an overall business risk of Moderate. The company has a successful track record of raising venture capital funding. | | ✓ |
| | In the panel's judgment, the company is likely to have sufficient funding and revenue to support operations for a minimum period of 12 months. | | ✓ |

Team and capacity			
Capacity and skills	In the panel's judgment, the company possesses the skills, customer empathy, and execution ability necessary to enable effective implementation, including a clear management structure. The senior management team consists of: • Sami Benchekroun, Managing Director • Rino Montiel, CTO • Corinna Herbst, COO • Lauren Kane, CSO • Justus Weweler, Head of Key Accounts and Customer Success		✓
Development planning	Customers are regularly engaged in product/service development activity and there is a consistent process for updates to customers on new and planned developments. Improvements to the product are made based on user feedback.	Morressier works with a pool of researchers (both users and non-users of the platform) to understand their workflows, test new features and carry out usability testing. New features are announced in the company's blog and customer newsletter. User feedback is collected regularly through surveys after each academic conference and in debrief meetings, with notes from both informing work on new product features. Evidence of new features based on user feedback was provided.	✓
Team scalability	The team possesses necessary skills and management structure in place for effective implementation with a minimum of two-three institutions. There is scalability planning in place for the team to meet growing capacity and support requirements. Proven track record of delivering live implementations and providing appropriate support to several institutions.	The company is able to support several implementations in parallel. There is a dedicated Customer Success team based in Berlin headed by a member of the senior management team. The standard customer license agreement covers SLAs. Response times and client satisfaction with the responses are monitored, with a median response time to customer queries of less than 2 hrs and 98% of customers rating the quality of support 4 or 5 out of 5, based on a volume of over 400 incoming queries a month.	✓

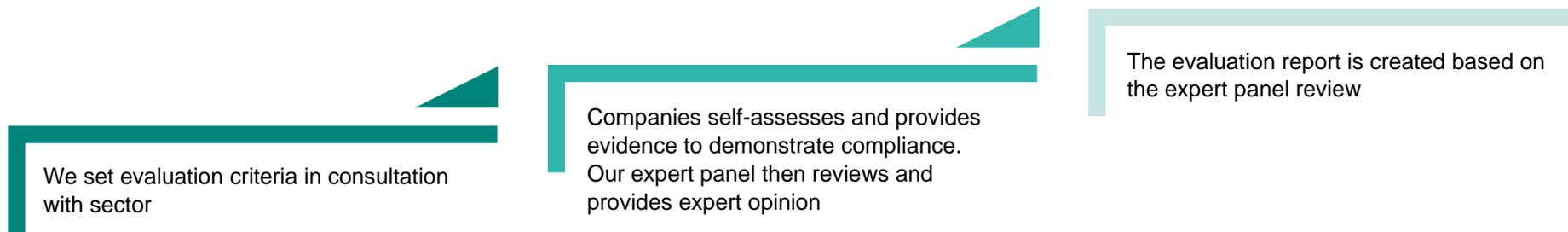| Data and information security * marks minimum technical requirements			
Security awareness*	The company follows the NSCS 10 Steps for Cyber Security guidelines, including a clear process for dealing with incidents.		✓
Encryption*	All data transfers across public and private networks use an encrypted method. Traffic between application containers is encrypted using HTTPS and not accessible from the interne; traffic between applications and backend services and databases is also encrypted using TLS. Morressier is A rated by SSL Labs.		✓
Data storage*	All data is stored within the EU, with the majority on Google Cloud servers located in Frankfurt and Dublin, and some minor parts on AWS servers in Dublin and Frankfurt. The product is hosted on Google Cloud in Frankfurt and Dublin.		✓
Institutional questionnaires	The company has completed numerous data and security questionnaires and provided evidence of this.		✓
Password storage	The company uses the PBKDF2 algorithm with 10,000 iterations sha512 hashes and a randomized salt of 20 characters.		✓
Technology stack	The company has provided a description of the technical stack and can share this with customers on demand.		✓
Penetration testing	Internal penetration testing is undertaken twice a year in June and December and led by the company's CTO. External penetration has not been carried out but can be carried out if required by a customer.		◆
Product integration			
Third party content	Any third-party content is licensed to be used as a part of the product	The company has provided a list of third-party services and libraries in use.	✓
Single sign-on	The product can integrate with institutional single sign-on and preferably integrate with the UK Access Management Federation.	Single sign-on is set up by default with an ORCID id in the general platform, with full support for oAuth 2.0.	✓
Good practice and accessibility			
Source code management	Morressier uses a private Gitlab repo and follows Gitflow.		✓
Accessibility requirements	The web service meets or has a plan to meet WCAG 2.1 checklist Level AA within required timeframes.	Many parts of the product already meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA and some parts of the product require further tweaks to achieve full compliance. This will be carried out step by step between May and August, with live releases of all areas being available at the latest in September. The company provided a full gap analysis, compliance record and timeframes for fixes attached.	◆
	Mobile and desktop apps (where this is relevant) take into consideration accessibility best practice.	Morressier's iOS app follows Apple developer guidelines for accessibility and uses a monochrome high-contrast visual language with a consistent style hierarchy, accessible layouts and components, and minimised animation and motion; large regular-weight high-contrast text for readability; and the interface does not rely on colour to differentiate objects or communicate information.	✓

Backup requirements	The company has a backup strategy, including a policy on backup retention.		✓
Business continuity and service resilience	The company has a service resilience policy, which includes the use of load balancers and failure response through redundancy and autoscaling.		✓

Welsh language			
Products for use in Wales need to provide Welsh versions	A statement of ability to provide a Welsh language version of any student or staff-facing products.	The product does not currently support a Welsh language version.	◆

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In undertaking this level of due diligence, we hope to reduce some of the risks institutions face when working with start-ups and increase the level of collaboration between institutions and start-ups.

The healthcheck process:
Overview of step-up and how we assess

We set evaluation criteria in consultation with sector

Companies self-assesses and provides evidence to demonstrate compliance. Our expert panel then reviews and provides expert opinion

The evaluation report is created based on the expert panel review

Step-up is a joint initiative by Jisc and Emerge Education.

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