

BRIEFING

European University
Association CoARA Action
Plan (2023-2027)

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INTRODUCTION

Academic careers and research assessment are part of the strategic priorities of the European University Association (EUA). Moreover, EUA played a key role in drafting the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment, together with Science Europe, the European Commission and Dr Karen Stroobants (in her individual capacity as researcher with expertise in research on research).

EUA is also one of the initiators of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) and one of the first signatories of the Agreement.

EUA remains committed to the principles and objectives of CoARA and will continue to support the coalition's goals through its activities.

This document outlines the main activities of the Association during the development of the Agreement and the creation of CoARA, as well as current and future activities of the Association that will continue to promote and support the reform of research assessment.

GENERAL REFLECTIONS

Reforming academic careers is a strategic priority for EUA, as defined in [EUA's vision for universities in 2030 – Universities without walls](#). This includes “using a broader set of evaluation practices for academic careers, which include a wide definition of impact, beyond traditional bibliometric indicators; promoting further parity of esteem between different career paths, including parity of esteem between research and teaching”.

EUA has had an important role in building a knowledge base and contributing evidence on universities research assessment practices, namely through its [2019 EUA Open Science and Open Access Survey on Research Assessment](#) and its joint work with the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and SPARC Europe on [Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change](#).

The Association's work on research assessment and academic careers has been developed in different strands within EUA's work. However, in the past few years, the Association has endeavoured to create more synergies between these activities. This includes:

- ◆ Exploring the incorporation of the topic of research assessment in EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP). This programme supports institutions in fulfilling their responsibility for assessing and improving the quality of their own activities.
- ◆ Identifying and enhancing synergies between the Association's activities in research assessment and Open Science, innovation, doctoral education, academic careers and staff development in teaching.

The EUA has actively engaged in promoting responsible research assessment through its activities. These are in line with the Association's [R&I Agenda](#) and with its [Open Science Agenda](#).

The [EUA R&I Agenda](#) defines three priorities for the Association's R&I vision for the European higher education sector. Of particular importance in this context is the fact that academic careers are a fundamental building block for the successful implementation of all three priorities. In priority 2 'Cultivating robust, diverse and collaborative R&I culture(s)', the Agenda outlines that "assessment frameworks, criteria and practices for academic careers should recognise the comprehensive set of skills and activities of academics, including research, teaching and learning, innovation, management/leadership and service to society. Researchers' experiences, competencies (including soft skills) and behaviours must be explicitly recognised and rewarded, paying particular attention to early-career researchers (ECRs). This will allow for the development of flexible and sustainable career pathways."

Research assessment is one of the three major priority areas for EUA work on Open Science. The aim being that "a critical mass of universities across Europe will be engaged in discussions about or in the development and implementation of more responsible, transparent and sustainable evaluation practices for research activities and careers, including incentives and rewards for Open Science throughout the research process. They will share the objective of working towards assessment approaches that appropriately balance qualitative peer-review with quantitative metrics, which consider the context and purpose of the evaluation, based on broad definitions of quality and impact, and aligned with institutional missions and values" ([EUA Open Science Agenda](#)).

Moreover, EUA considers that the principles guiding the assessment of individuals' careers should be broadly aligned with those used in other evaluation processes within universities, particularly in the assessment of research and research institutions. This is also in line with the vision and principles outlined in the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment.

EUA'S ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING THE REFORM OF RESEARCH ASSESSMENT

The following table details EUA's former and planned actions according to the commitments of the Agreement for Reforming Research Assessment. The implementation of this Action Plan will be monitored by the EUA Board.

CoARA commitment	EUA's past and future actions
<p>1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research.</p>	<p>As an association, EUA does not conduct any form of research assessment processes itself.</p> <p>EUA's activities related to research assessment have been developed according to the principles outlined below, which are in line with the core commitments of the Agreement. EUA's future activities will continue to follow these principles, as highlighted in the EUA R&I Agenda 2027 and the EUA Open Science Agenda 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Supporting EUA members in implementing the commitments of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and organising peer-learning activities to boost this effort. ◆ Reflecting on institutional approaches to research assessment. ◆ Advocating for responsible, transparent and sustainable assessment practices. ◆ Initiating and leading work to acknowledge academic career assessment from the perspective of all university missions, including the R&I dimension. ◆ Raising awareness, build capacity and create support for university initiatives among the main actors (including [early-career] researchers, other research performing organisations, research funders and policy makers).
<p>2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.</p>	<p>EUA also supports the INORMS 'More Than Our Rank' initiative. The Association considers that there is no single definition of quality in higher education institutions, and that this should rather be considered in the context of national, institutional and departmental or subject-specific parameters. EUA also published a briefing in October 2023 to raise further awareness and encourage reflection of some of the potential pitfalls of rankings and provide its members with guidance towards their responsible use.</p>
<p>3. Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index.</p>	<p>Discussions and knowledge sharing relating to and gathered within CoARA are regularly taking place in the following EUA structures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Research and Innovation Strategy Group ◆ Expert Group on Open Science ◆ Expert Group on Innovation ◆ EUA Board ◆ EUA Council ◆ EUA-Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE) Steering Committee
<p>4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment.</p>	<p>Discussions and knowledge sharing relating to and gathered within CoARA are regularly taking place in the following EUA structures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Research and Innovation Strategy Group ◆ Expert Group on Open Science ◆ Expert Group on Innovation ◆ EUA Board ◆ EUA Council ◆ EUA-Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE) Steering Committee

CoARA commitment	EUA's past and future actions
<p>5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to.</p>	<p>EUA contributed in-kind in preparing the Agreement and creating the CoARA coalition. EUA also contributed in-kind to the initial Secretariat of CoARA leading up to the Constitutive Assembly (1 December 2022).</p> <p>EUA organised a workshop series on the development of the Agreement for Reforming Research Assessment and CoARA (2022). Moreover, it co-organised with national rectors' conferences a series of national-level webinars to raise awareness on research assessment reforms and CoARA (2022-2023).</p>
<p>6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools, and processes.</p>	<p>EUA is co-chairing and coordinating the CoARA Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment (WG ACA; 2023-2025), which aims to broaden the reflection on research assessment to academic career assessment, taking into account the full range of work conducted by academics in research, teaching and learning, innovation, management/ leadership and service to society. The Working Group works towards developing an adaptable toolbox for ACA, considering all university missions and the broad scope of activities, skills and competences of academic staff at different stages of their career. The WG ACA mapped institutional and national-level initiatives on ACA and is working towards identifying elements that can be used in different contexts and upscaled to the supra-national level. These outputs will be published during autumn 2024. The final toolbox developed by the WG ACA is expected in autumn 2025. Detailed information on the WG ACA and its activities, including recordings of webinars, can be found on the CoARA website.</p>
<p>7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use.</p>	<p>As part of its activities, EUA has established in 2024 its Task and Finish Group on Academic Careers. This group provides advice on and supports EUA's work on reforming academic careers. The group will develop a vision paper on the impact of a holistic approach to academic careers, namely parity of esteem between education, research and innovation, and service to society in academic careers, outlining some key principles based on identified good practice. The group will develop its work in the period of 2024-2025.</p>
<p>8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition.</p>	<p>EUA is also coordinating the STAFF-DEV project (EU-funded), during the period 2024-2026. The project aims to analyse how staff development in teaching and academic assessment are conducted at European higher education institutions (HEIs) and to strengthen institutional capacity and strategies in this regard.</p> <p>EUA will continue to promote awareness of research assessment and academic career assessment reform among its members, encouraging them to share information about their own reform initiatives.</p>

CoARA commitment	EUA's past and future actions
<p>9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments.</p>	<p>Following the publication of this 2023-2027 plan, EUA will regularly communicate on its progress. EUA will also disseminate initiatives from its membership – both universities and national rectors’ conferences – on the implementation of the CoARA commitments through various communication channels. These include, inter alia, the Association’s newsletter (19 000+ subscribers), social media (49K+ followers) and website (1.8+ million views in 2023).</p>
<p>10. Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, and make datanopenly available for evidence gathering and research.</p>	<p>EUA is committed to continuing to collect and share information and experiences from its members on the reform of research assessment. The Association will also continue to foster an open dialogue on the research assessment reform process and academic careers with all relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>The outputs of the WG ACA, including those of the mapping phase (survey results and database, case studies, lessons learned) and the toolbox, will be published on Zenodo and made openly available for the community.</p>

RELEVANT EUA PUBLICATIONS

2023

[Key considerations for the use of rankings by higher education institutions](#)
[EUA Research & Innovation Agenda 2027](#)

2022

[The EUA Open Science Agenda 2025](#)

2021

[Universities without walls – A vision for 2030](#)
[Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change and accompanying online repository](#)
[From principles to practices: Open Science at Europe’s universities 2020-2021](#) [EUA Open Science Survey results](#)
[Open Science in university approaches to academic assessment: Follow-up to the 2020-21 EUA Open Science survey](#)

2019

[2019 EUA Open Science and Open Access Survey on Research Assessment \(accompanying data\)](#)

2018

[EUA Roadmap on Research Assessment in the Transition to Open Science](#)

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 49 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations, EUA ensures that the voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact their activities.

The Association provides unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, websites and publications.