



CoARA Action Plan 2023

University of Oulu, Finland

Assessment principles at the University of Oulu

The University of Oulu signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment on November 11th, 2022. Our goal is that the assessment of research and researchers recognize all types of research outputs, practices and activities, and take into account different career paths and personal circumstances when assessing the quality and impact of research.

In March 2023, we published the [Principles for the Assessment of Research and Researchers at the University of Oulu](#), which highlights the priorities in our approach to the reform. According to these principles, the assessment in our university is:

- based on qualitative evaluation
- part of a broader whole
- ethical, so that it respects equality and non-discrimination
- based on reliable data
- tailored: one size does not fit all cases
- transparent and open

Our assessment principles are based on the following national and international commitments:

- The Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)
- Metric Tide Report
- Leiden Manifesto
- Hong Kong Manifesto
- Recommendation for the Responsible Evaluation of a Researcher in Finland 2020
- Agreement on the Reform of Research Assessment & Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)



The road to the assessment reform

We started the assessment reform project at the beginning of 2020 by signing the DORA declaration. In addition to the principles listed above, the Working Group for Responsible Assessment has recommended the introduction of a Narrative CV hybrid model and a Career Assessment Matrix (CAM) to support the implementation of the principles. Both will be piloted during autumn 2023 and spring 2024.

The guidelines for researcher recruitment, and career advancement are being updated in accordance with the requirements of the new assessment principles.

In 2021 we published [recommendation for responsible use of publication metrics](#) which is in line with the DORA declaration. The recommendation highlights the key principles in the use of publication metrics when assessing individual researchers. The principles are:

- publication metrics is used only to support qualitative evaluation
- journal based metrics is not allowed
- differences between disciplines are taken into account
- the data, methods and results are as open and transparent as possible
- publication indicators are selected appropriately

In 2023 we published openly available guide [Responsible Use of Publication Metrics at the University of Oulu](#) which includes also instructions for [using bibliometric services](#) in various cases like grant applications, internal funding allocation, and strategy work.



Assessment reform roadmap 2020 - 2027

2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 - 2027
Signature of DORA	Recommendation for the responsible use of publication metrics at the UO was published	The first pilot of the Narrative CV hybrid model and Career Assessment Matrix, CAM	UO's principles of Responsible Assessment were published	Cultural change towards responsible assessment	Trainings continue
Launch of the multidisciplinary Working Group for Responsible Assessment		Gathering feedback from the university community on the UO assessment reform	Introduction of the Narrative CV hybrid model and CAM	Update of recruitment-related assessment guidelines: - Recruitment at the University of Oulu - Instructions for academic evaluators - Call templates - Recruitment memo template	Monitoring continues
Commitment to the national recommendation		Signing the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment	Trainings start		
		Joining CoARA	Second pilot of the Narrative CV hybrid model and CAM		
				More extensive trainings start	
				Monitoring begins	

Tools & guidelines

- Narrative CV hybrid model
- Career Assessment Matrix (CAM)
- Responsible use of publication metrics guidelines
- Recruitment-related assessment guidelines

Actors

- Working Group for Responsible Assessment 2020 - 2023
- Assessment Policy Committee 2023 -
- HR Development Manager, HR Director and HR Managers
- Contact: responsibleassessment@oulu.fi



Engaging the community

The Working Group for Responsible Assessment was established in February 2020. Researchers from different disciplines and at different career stages, as well as HR representatives and library's bibliometrics experts were appointed to the group.

During the preparation phase of the principles and guidelines, the Working group collected comments from, e.g., all faculties of the university. The reform was also discussed several times in the Research Council, Management Group of Research, University's Working Committee and Co-operation Council.

The reform project, draft of the principles, instructions and suggested tools were open for comments by the university community for one month in the autumn of 2022. At that time, over 150 comments and change proposals were received. Based on the comments, the principles and other documentation were updated, and the answers to the questions were published on the university's intranet.

The piloting of the Narrative CV hybrid model and the Career Assessment Matrix was first carried out in 2022 and will be repeated in the winter of 2023 - 2024.

When the recruitment guidelines are updated in early 2024, there will be an opportunity for the university community to comment, but the method and extent of the commenting has not yet been decided.

In the spring of 2024, the training of the entire scientific community and the university management will begin. Our plan is to educate each unit's own trainers, i.e., using the train-the-trainer approach.

Sharing the practices with others

In accordance with CoARA's commitments, we shall openly share our practices and experiences. Our policy document [Principles for the Assessment of Research and Researchers](#) is already openly accessible. In Finland, higher education institutions and research institutes work closely together to develop responsible assessment. We have shared our practices and drafts of our tools in these national working groups. After implementation, all instructions, guidelines and tools will be made openly available. In addition, we will share our best practices with CoARA members whenever possible.

Regarding information sharing between CoARA members, we do not yet have a detailed plan, but we will make one once the coalition's working methods are confirmed. In order to share information as comprehensively as possible, it is our hope that CoARA's rules give our experts the opportunity to participate in working groups relevant to our university.



Key challenges

The major challenge in reforming research assessment is long-established practices and assessment culture which stresses quantity (especially of publications) over quality. In addition, the funding model by the Ministry of Education and Culture for the Finnish universities places an emphasis on the quantity and Jufo-level of publications. This has negative and indirect effects on researchers.

At the university level, the biggest challenge is changing the traditional assessment culture towards a more qualitative approach, such as peer review and expert evaluation. Therefore, it is essential that the whole community understands that quantitative assessment should be used only to support qualitative assessment. The assessment of research and researchers has mainly been responsible at our university, but we still have work to get assessees and assessors to understand and adopt the new responsible assessment principles, instructions, and tools. In addition, the qualitative approaches have their own challenges and require human resources, which are issues to be solved as well.

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