

Action Plan UAB-CoARA (Coalition for Advancement of Research Assessment) 2024-27

Introduction

In a constantly evolving scientific context, research evaluation has become a key element in ensuring the quality and relevance of generated knowledge. In this regard, the European Union (EU) has taken a proactive approach to transforming evaluation systems, with the goal of promoting transparency, diversity, and excellence in scientific production. This initiative aligns with the fundamental principles guiding European research and innovation policies.

One of the essential pillars of this paradigm shift is the European initiative CoARA (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment, www.coara.eu), driven by Science Europa and the European Universities Association (EUA) with support from the European Commission. CoARA brings together many organizations (730 as of May 2024) involved in research processes and/or evaluation. During the early months of 2022, a participatory process led to an agreement containing 10 common principles and commitments to drive systemic research evaluation reform. The agreement was published in July 2022 (<https://coara.eu/agreement/the-agreement-full-text/>), and by November 2022, UAB had joined. Signatory organizations include AQU, ANECA, CRUE, CSIC, CERCA, and over thirty Spanish universities.

The key point of the agreement is that research evaluation systems for researchers and research organizations recognize diverse outcomes, practices, and activities that maximize research quality and impact. This requires introducing qualitative aspects into evaluation, with peer review as a central component, always supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators. In fact, the scientific community itself has persistently questioned the current research evaluation system due to its limitations, biases, and reliance on metrics. To advance toward a new evaluation system, the agreement outlines principles, commitments, and timelines for reforms, establishing the foundation for a coalition of organizations willing to work together on implementation. These coalitions create communities of practice for sharing experiences and learning. With coalition support, organizations will decide on steps to implement commitments and the pace of their reform process, considering their national context, disciplinary focus, research structures, strategic objectives, and organizational mission.

At UAB, a working group has been established under the Vice-Rectorate for Research and the Office of Institutional Projects, including technical staff and academic representatives from various fields of knowledge (<https://www.uab.cat/en/open-science/coara>). This working group has several objectives:

- Generate a space for debate and reflection on methodologies and indicators for evaluating academic careers and the social impact of research.
- Align UAB's institutional strategy with European policies promoted by CoARA.
- Actively participate in CoARA activities, including working groups such as the Spanish National Chapter.
- Specifically, within the framework of CoARA's European initiative, develop an action plan for implementing CoARA principles."

Action Plan UAB-CoARA (2024-2027)

Objectives

- Analyse our current institutional practices in research and evaluation of researchers.
- Based on the previous analysis, identify possible areas for improvement and obstacles to address.
- At the institutional level, develop, pilot, and implement alternative evaluation practices to replace or complement the existing ones.
- Engage the UAB community in this process.

CoARA commitments	Main lines of Action	Current Status	Actions 2024-2027	Responsible	Monitoring method
<p>1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research.</p> <p>2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative Indicators.</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 (as proxies for quality and impact). 'Inappropriate uses' include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relying exclusively on author-based metrics (e.g. counting papers, patents, citations, grants, etc.) to assess quality and/or impact. <p>4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment.</p>	<p>Institutional Commitments</p>	<p>UAB signs the COARA agreement (Nov 2022)</p>	<p>Institutional declaration in line with CoARA commitments. (Fall 2024). The declaration will include the internal organization that will make possible to advance in the reform of research assessment.</p>	<p>The institutional declaration will be developed by the Vice-rector of Research and the Institutional Projects Office and approved by the Committee of Research and the governing Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional declaration signed and published.

<p>6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes.</p> <p>10. Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research</p>	<p>Analyse, identify and test UAB institutional practices susceptible to be improved meeting COARA Commitments.</p>	<p>Not initiated</p>	<p>1) Mapping of the different UAB calls, tools, and mechanisms currently implementing.</p> <p>2) Co-creation sessions with UAB Community to explore and suggest new ways for research assessment. The focus groups will include R1-R4 and diversity of disciplines. Also gender balance and diversity will be considered. It will also include technical staff closely related to the research evaluation assessment.</p> <p>3) Pilot phase: having into account the previous exploratory tasks 1 and 2, potential changes will be tested and assessed.</p>	<p>Vice-rector of Research Institutional Projects Office</p> <p>Task force: Research Management Unit, Research Valorisation Unit, International Projects Office, Libraries Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic meetings • Number of focus groups • Number of Researchers involved in the process. • Number of technical staff involved in the process. • Open report on pilot results
<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>Actions related to creating CoARA awareness and developing tools to support and guide UAB community in the transition to the reform of research assessment.</p>	<p>Communication Strategy</p> <p>Session: New practices in the research assessment</p> <p>Training currently in place: : Citizen science RRI Support for narrative CV</p>	<p>Communication strategy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Surveys to be launched within the 3 years for multiple purposes linked to COARA action plan. 2) Awareness raising sessions about COARA at University level. 3) COARA website development <p>Training Provide new training to support research community (both for evaluation and application) in the transition to the reform of research assessment (such as narrative training; social impact; open science)</p>	<p>Vice-rector of Research Institutional Projects Office</p> <p>Task force: UAB doctoral school and Continuous Education Unit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new trainings related to the reform of Research assessment. • People trained
<p>5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organizational changes committed to</p>	<p>Actions focus to ensure the proper development and implementation of the UAB COARA Action Plan.</p>	<p>UAB CoARA working group and action plan task force in place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COARA Action Plan implementation Team • Task force for internal Evaluation of the Research Assessment • Task force for Communication 	<p>Vice-rector of Research + Institutional Projects Office</p>	<p>Biannual meeting and annual meetings Open annual follow-up report</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task force for training 		
8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition	UAB contribution for the exchange of practices and experiences to enable mutual learning at regional, national and international level.	CoARA working groups already in place and contributing.	<p>Participation of UAB members in COARA working groups at European Level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teresa Sorder- COARA working group on social Impact • José Luís Molina- COARA working group Early-and-mid-Career Researchers (EMCRs) • Eva Isabel Nueno - CoARA working group Multilingualism and Language Biases in Research Assessment <p>Participation of UAB within European alliances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECIU <p>Participation of UAB at regional Networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGAUR • ACUP • AQU • ANECA 		<p>Annual open report on COARA working groups.</p> <p>Exchange practices (nr.) and experience at European level</p> <p>Number of exchanges and practices at Regional and national level.</p>
9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the principles and implementation of the Commitments	Progress	Not initiated	Elaboration of the Annual report		Annual report

Governance and monitoring of the Action Plan

The actions of the UAB-CoARA 2024-2027 Action Plan are framed institutionally within the scope of the Vice-Rectorate for Research. The Action Plan has been developed by a working group derived from the UAB-CoARA committee, which was composed of researchers from different areas of knowledge, and technical staff involved in research management.

The working group will meet every six months to assess the implementation and update of the AP.

The Action Plan will be:

- Shared and discussed with the team members working on the Research Assessment Advancement Plan.
- Open for consultation with the UAB community.
- Submitted for approval by the Research, Innovation, and Knowledge Transfer Committee.
- Submitted for approval by the Governing Council.