



**Action Plan of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid for the Reform
of Research Activity Evaluation 2024–2027**

Within the framework of
the Coalition for the Reform of Research Assessment (CoARA)

Approved by the Governing Council on December 19, 2024

INDICE

1. Introduction	2
2. International Context	2
3. National Context	5
4. Action Plan for the Reform of Research Assessment: Plan CoARA – UAM 2024-2027 ...	6

1. Introduction

The Autonomous University of Madrid has been a member of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) since its inception on December 1, 2022. Part of the commitment to CoARA involves the development of a four-year institutional action plan to comply with the Agreement for the Reform of Research Assessment, which UAM signed in November 2022.

This document outlines the action plan that UAM commits to implementing between 2024 and 2027, which was approved by the Governing Council on December 19, 2024, following a process of internal consultation and participation. In preparing this action plan, the recommendations provided in the document “Support for CoARA signatories in the preparation of action plans” have been taken into account”.

2. International Context

Since the publication of key initiatives such as the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA, 2013) and the Leiden Manifesto (2015), the scientific community has reached a broad consensus on the urgent need to reform research assessment. This change aims to promote high-quality and sustainable research that strengthens knowledge sharing. Criticisms of current assessment systems have highlighted problems associated with inadequate practices, such as the incorrect application of restrictive quality criteria, which creates unsustainable pressure on researchers (e.g., Hicks & Wouters, 2015; LIBER, 2018; Universities of Norway, 2021; TSV, 2020).

Furthermore, it has been recognized how research assessment is interconnected with other changes in the academic sphere, such as the advancement of open science, concerns about research integrity, and the focus on equality. This reinforces the urgency of redefining the criteria and methods used to evaluate scientific output.

Within this framework, the European Commission (EC), as part of Action 3 of the New European Research Area, included in its strategy the creation of a group dedicated to developing the foundations and tools necessary to reform the research assessment system in Europe. During this process, an initial report titled "Towards a Reform of the Research Evaluation System: Scoping Report" (2021) was prepared, aiming to improve the quality, performance, and impact of European research. This report established key principles for assessment criteria and processes: quality and impact, diversity, inclusion, and collaboration. In July 2022, following an extensive participatory process, the EC presented the "Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment" (ARRA), an institutional agreement designed to be signed by organizations committed to actively supporting this reform.

The Reform of Research Assessment

The ARRA aims to consolidate and expand existing initiatives to establish a comprehensive and unified document on responsible research assessment, including specific

commitments and collaboration mechanisms. These commitments, which must be fulfilled within five years, seek to acknowledge the diversity of outcomes, practices, and activities that optimize research quality and its impacts, thereby strengthening trust in the research process.

The principles underpinning the Agreement guide the reform of research assessment criteria and processes while respecting the autonomy of participating organizations. These principles are embodied in ten commitments that advocate recognizing the diversity of research profiles, reviewing the metrics used, and promoting multidisciplinary. The Agreement also establishes an implementation timeline and details the foundations for creating a coalition of organizations committed to designing and carrying out these changes.

Regarding the general conditions of research assessment, processes and practices must ensure the independence and transparency of the necessary data and criteria; protect the ethics and integrity that safeguard the freedom of scientific research; respect the autonomy of research institutions; and promote science that is committed to society.

Thus, the commitments of the ARRA include four fundamental principles:

1. Recognize the diversity of contributions and careers in research according to the needs and nature of the research.
2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation, for which peer review is central, supported by the responsible use of quantitative indicators.
3. Abandon the inappropriate uses of journal- and publication-based metrics in research assessment, particularly the misuse of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and the h-index.
4. Avoid the use of research institution rankings in research assessment.

These core commitments are supported by six practical commitments: three commitments to enable progress towards new criteria, tools, and processes for research assessment, and three commitments to facilitate mutual learning, communicate progress, and ensure that new approaches are evidence-based:

And six other principles that support the implementation of the first four:

1. Allocate resources to research assessment reform as needed to achieve the committed organizational changes.
2. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools, and processes.
3. Raise awareness about research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on the criteria and assessment processes, as well as their use.
4. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition.
5. Communicate progress made in adhering to the Principles and implementing the Commitments.

6. Evaluate practices, criteria, and tools based on solid evidence and the state of the art in research, and make the data openly available for collection and research.

With the aim of effectively implementing ARRA, the Coalition for the Advancement of Research Assessment (CoARA) was formally established on December 1, 2022. It is composed of all the institutions that signed ARRA. Currently, CoARA has around 800 member organizations, including universities, research centers, scientific associations, funding bodies, and evaluation agencies at the national and regional levels. Spain leads in the number of signatories.

CoARA aims, based on consensus and discussions within the international community, to systematically reform research assessment and improve evaluation practices, relying on common principles and defined commitments, which are expected to be implemented within a five-year timeframe.

In its first year of operation, CoARA organized its work through working groups focused on specific topics (such as academic careers, multilingualism, and metrics) and national chapters. In Spain, the Spanish National Chapter was led by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE), and the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), with support from the Ministry of Universities and later the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, and the participation of more than 70 organizations, including UAM. This chapter considered the contributions gathered at the National Forum for the Reform of Research Assessment, which held its first meeting in January 2023 at the University of Barcelona (UB).

The responsibilities of the Spanish National Chapter include: (1) Creating a joint initiative to promote and support the review and development of research assessment criteria, tools, and processes in Spain, in line with the principles and criteria of the Agreement described in the four core commitments; (2) Collaborating with organizations that conduct and fund research, evaluation agencies, and researchers' associations in Spain; (3) Enabling mutual learning within the Chapter and in collaboration with CoARA's working groups. The expected impact includes: (i) defining the objectives of research assessment reform in Spain with a view to 2030; (ii) co-designing assessment systems in collaboration with institutions and organizations within the country's research and innovation ecosystem; (iii) implementing pilot projects to test the reform outcomes in different institutions and evaluate their impact on evaluators and those being evaluated (individuals, research units, institutions, and projects); and (iv) gradually and simultaneously executing the reform at the national level. The official presentation of the Spanish National Chapter took place on February 9, 2024, at the headquarters of the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities.

By joining CoARA, UAM has committed to reviewing its evaluation system and gradually incorporating new practices and criteria that promote an assessment environment recognizing diverse scientific outcomes, practices, and activities, with the intrinsic aim of maximizing the quality and impact of research.

To this end, the actions related to research assessment within UAM are intended to be gradually aligned with the principles established in the Agreement on the Reform of Research Assessment, while properly informing the university community. This includes

designing evaluation criteria and processes that emphasize quality, impact, diversity, inclusion, and collaboration.

3. National Context

Since 2022, significant contributions and regulatory changes have begun to take place in Spain. First, the Science Law (Law 17/2022, Article 37) stands out, followed by the recent Organic Law of the University System (LOSU) (Organic Law 2/2023), which introduces modifications to the accreditation of faculty and researchers (later developed in Royal Decree 678/2023) and specific criteria to promote open science, which must be incorporated by quality control agencies in their evaluations.

Likewise, the 2023-2027 National Open Science Strategy (ENCA) includes as one of its strategic pillars the implementation of new research assessment systems, along with an incentive and recognition system to promote open science practices.

In practice, one of the main reflections of these regulatory changes is seen in the modification of the evaluation criteria for six-year research periods ("sexenios") and accreditations. This materialized with the creation of the Monitoring Committee for the National Accreditation Process, which was established following the change in leadership at ANECA in February 2023 and the subsequent signing of commitments with DORA and CoARA in April of the same year. The Committee's objective is to integrate these regulatory changes, adapt the current evaluation system, and ensure compliance with the commitments made to DORA and CoARA. In September 2024, ANECA published CoARA's Action Plan.

The following table presents the *Action Plan for the Reform of Research Assessment: Plan CoARA – UAM 2024-2027*, a roadmap that defines the strategic objectives and priority actions to align evaluation processes with the principles of quality, equity, and transparency promoted by the CoARA Coalition. This plan aims to drive a sustainable and gradual transformation in the evaluation systems at the Autonomous University of Madrid, fostering excellence and the social and economic impact of research.

4. Action Plan for the Reform of Research Assessment: Plan CoARA – UAM 2024-2027

CoARA Commitments	Lines of action	Actions	Period	Responsible parties	Evaluation mechanisms
Commit resources to reform research assessment.	Development and monitoring of the CoARA Action Plan at UAM.	Creation of the internal CoARA-UAM working group	2024	CoARA-UAM working group	<p>Presentation of the CoARA-UAM Action Plan to the Governing Council and the governing bodies of the faculties and research centers at UAM.</p> <p>Drafting of an annual report on the actions carried out at UAM.</p> <p>Validation of the annual report by the CoARA-UAM working group.</p>
		Annual monitoring of the proposed actions	2025-2027		
Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools, and processes.	Review, analysis, and updating of internal calls to incorporate criteria aligned with CoARA (updating documents, applicant guides, evaluator guides, evaluation process, and UAM regulations, following CoARA principles).	Review and update of specific calls for predoctoral hiring.	2025-2027	Doctoral School / Vice-Rectorate for Research and Library	Modification of regulations to specify the general CoARA evaluation criterio.
		Review and update of specific calls for postdoctoral hiring.		Vice-Rectorate for Teaching and Research Staff / Vice-Rectorate for Research and Library	Modification of regulations to specify CoARA's general evaluation criterio.
		Recommendations for the review and update of the guidelines for competitions for the hiring of permanent and temporary teaching and research staff		Vice-Rectorate for Teaching and Research Staff / Vice-Rectorate for Research and Library	Verification that the general guidelines include the recommended provisions.

		Review and update of the criteria for awards.		Vice-Rectorate for Teaching and Research Staff / Vice-Rectorate for Research and Library / Doctoral School	
Raise awareness about the reform of research assessment and provide transparency, communication, guidance, and training on evaluation criteria and processes, as well as their use.	Training and dissemination program on evaluation criteria aligned with CoARA and Open Science.	Organization of training activities for teaching and research staff	2024-2027	Doctoral School/ Vice-Rectorate for Research and Library	The CoARA-UAM working group will collect data related to the organization of activities, such as dates, participants, program, etc. This data will be included in the annual report of the CoARA-UAM working group
		Organization of training activities for library and research management staff.	2025-2027	Vice-Rectorate for Research and Library / Library	
		Development of evaluation guidelines based on criteria aligned with the principles and the use of responsible metrics.	2025-2026	Vice-Rectorate for Research and Library	
		Development of a guide for researchers on preparing narrative CVs.	2025	Vice-Rectorate for Research and Library / Library	
		Development of guidelines for preparing Data Management Plans following the FAIR principles.	2025	Vice-Rectorate for Research and Library / Library	

Communicate the progress made regarding adherence to the principles and implementation of the CoARA commitments.	Communication plan for the launch of the implementation of the actions proposed in the CoARA-UAM Action Plan	Inclusion on the UAM Open Science website of information about CoARA and UAM's Action Plan for its implementation, along with a calendar of planned activities, as well as information on the degree of implementation of the new criteria for research assessment.	2024-2025	CoARA-UAM working group Open Science Coordination – UAM	Verification of the information in the CoARA-UAM annual report.
Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the CoARA coalition.	Information exchange with CoARA and among the institutions participating in the Coalition.	Participation of UAM in the CoARA General Assembly	2024-2027	CoARA-UAM working group	Inclusion of the activities for exchanging practices and experiences carried out in the CoARA-UAM working group annual report
		Participation of UAM in the Spanish National Chapter of CoARA.			
		Participation in CoARA working groups that are of strategic interest to UAM.			

