

Reforming Academic Career Assessment (ACA): a survey from the CoARA Working Group on ACA

Aims and background

Academic career assessment frameworks, criteria and practices should recognise the comprehensive set of skills, roles and activities of academic staff over the course of their career. As part of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), the Working Group on “Reforming Academic Career Assessment” is launching a consultation to map reform initiatives on individual academic career assessment that are taking place at national, institutional and organisational levels.

CoARA is a global coalition of research funding organisations, research performing organisations, national/regional assessment authorities and agencies, learned societies and other relevant organisations engaged with the vision that the assessment of research, researchers and research organisations should recognise the diverse outputs, practices and activities that maximise the quality and impact of research. The vision also entails prioritising qualitative evaluations supported with responsible use of quantitative indicators and avoiding the use of Journal Impact Factor or university rankings in research assessment.

With this survey we hope to map existing initiatives of individual academic career assessment at higher education institutions and research organisations that aim to broaden the criteria and methods for evaluating the outputs and impacts of academic activities for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff. This includes the incentives and rewards available for all academic activities, i.e., education, research, knowledge transfer, service to society, impact generation, leadership and (for university medical centres) patient care.

If your institution or organisation is planning or undertaking changes in the process of academic career assessment, we would like to learn from your experience. **Knowledge on the challenges, enablers and change processes in your organisation can greatly help other higher education institutions and research organisations across the globe as they navigate their own reform initiatives. Your experience matters, let others learn from it!**

Focus of the survey

This survey intends to collect data on changes and reform processes in individual academic career assessment that are being considered or planned, or that have already been implemented in the last five years (2018-onwards) by higher education institutions and research organisations. In this context, assessment is meant to go beyond research activities. It rather refers to the entire spectrum of activities academic staff engage in and covers the catalogue of methods that are used to evaluate the contributions, outputs and impacts of academic activities for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression.

Who should complete the survey?

This survey should be completed by people who have an overarching view of setting-up and implementing academic career assessment procedures and practices for academic staff (recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression), at the higher education institution or research organisation, in the last five years (2018-onwards). Typically, this would be someone with a high-level position in the organisation's leadership and management team (e.g. rector/vice-rector offices), administrative services or others. It is possible that input from different colleagues will be needed (e.g. research, human resources, international affairs). Please note, however, that only one response per organisation should be submitted.

How will the information from the survey be used?

The information collected through this survey will inform the development of an online repository of case studies on academic career assessment and a dashboard of lessons learned. It will also be used to inform the development of an adaptable toolbox for academic career assessment that will cater for different institutional profiles and national contexts. The toolbox will also provide room for a diversity of career focuses and trajectories, in diverse academic fields. The toolbox may then be used by higher education institutions and research organisations to inform and support reforms on academic career assessment with the aim of recognizing and rewarding the full breadth of activities, roles and functions of academic staff.

Structure of the survey

The survey is divided in four main parts:

- Part 1. General Information
- Part 2. Academic career assessment at institutional/organisational level
- Part 3. General reflections on the reform process
- Part 4. Final considerations

Guidelines for completing the survey

Please take the following guidelines into account when filling out the survey:

- A glossary has been created to support this survey, since it uses jargon that might evoke different understandings, depending on the respondent. If you encounter terminology in questions that you would like to clarify, please refer to our glossary here.

- To facilitate collaboration between people and departments within your organisation, please find here a printable PDF version of the survey. In case you need to consult with others within your organisation, we suggest that you review the PDF version before you fill in the survey online. Please note that only the online version can be used to submit your final answers and that **only one response per organisation should be submitted.**
- The survey should be answered, preferably, on a computer. The survey saves answers per page as you click the “Next” button and move to the following page. You can exit the survey if you wish and re-enter by copying the link you have received in the same device and browser from which you first accessed it. The pages you have filled in up to that point will be saved. Please note that you will also be able to go back and make changes to your answers before submitting them.

Please press the “Submit” button at the end of the survey. Otherwise, your answers will not be recorded. After submitting the survey, you will be automatically redirected to an overview of your answers, which can be saved as a PDF.

Technical assistance

Should you have questions or encounter technical problems while filling out this survey, please contact the support team of the CoARA Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment at coara.wg.aca@gmail.com

Confidentiality and privacy statement

By default, the responses provided in this survey will be anonymised by removing all information that could directly identify an individual (personal information) or the respective organisation. The anonymised raw data will be published in an open access trusted repository (Zenodo). Your participation in this study is confidential.

Personal data gathered in the course of the survey will be handled according to the [European University Association’s privacy policy](#).

Do you agree with the Confidentiality and Privacy Policy?* (mandatory question)
- Yes



You may opt-in for your organisation's name to be disclosed in the dataset that will be published in an open access repository. This information may be further used by the CoARA Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment, for the purpose of interviews or case study analysis.

- I opt-in for my organisation's name to be disclosed in the survey database to be published in the open access repository.
- I agree to be contacted at a later stage for the purposes of interviews and/or case studies.

Glossary

Academic career assessment: the entire catalogue of methods that are used to evaluate the performance, outputs and impacts of academic activities for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression. This includes the incentives and rewards available for all academic activities, i.e., education, research, innovation/knowledge transfer, service to society, impact generation, leadership and (for university medical centres) patient care (based on [EUA, DORA, SPARCEurope, 2021](#); [Room for everyone's talent, 2019](#)). Therefore, in this survey, academic career assessment refers to the individual level and not to institutional assessment.

Academic staff: includes personnel whose primary assignment includes education, research and various engagement activities and service roles, which support the broader missions of their organisations and their own professional interests and development. This includes academic staff at any stage of academic employment, from those without substantial research or teaching experience (e.g. instructor, teacher and lecturer, as well as early stage researcher, junior researcher, doctorate research fellow and senior research fellow), to academic staff with substantial research or teaching experience, typically granting them the right to lead research projects and to teach at postgraduate level (e.g. research fellow, post-doctoral fellow, senior assistant, lecturer, senior lecturer, senior teacher, teaching assistant, assistant professor and associate professor), and the highest ranks of academic staff (e.g. professors, senior researchers and scientific directors). Academic staff also includes personnel with other titles (e.g. dean, director, associate dean, assistant dean, chair or head of department), if their principal activity is education or research (adapted from [UNESCO-UIS, OECD, Eurostat, 2006](#), p.23; [OECD, 2019](#), p.169-170).

Inappropriate use of metrics: includes relying exclusively on author-based metrics (e.g. counting papers, patents, citations, grants, etc.) to assess quality and/or impact; assessing outputs based on metrics relating to publication venue (i.e. journal-level metrics), format or language; relying on any other metrics that do not properly capture the dimension of performance it is intended to reflect, i.e. quality and/or impact (adapted from the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment, 2022](#)).

Reform: is understood as a deliberate process of institutional/organisational change in academic career assessment. This can be a more or less formalised process in the organisation, and includes awareness raising, implementation of smaller to larger changes in the processes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff.

Responsible use of metrics: responsible metrics can be understood in terms of several dimensions - robustness (basing metrics on the best possible data in terms of accuracy and scope), humility (recognising that quantitative evaluation should support – but not supplant – qualitative, expert assessment), transparency (keeping data collection and analytical processes open and transparent, so that those being evaluated can test and verify the results), diversity (accounting for variation by field, and using a range of indicators to reflect and support a plurality of research and researcher career paths across the system), and reflexivity (recognising and anticipating the systemic and potential effects of indicators, and updating them in response) (based on [The Metric Tide, 2015](#)).

Part 1. General Information

Please provide some information about your organisation:

1.1. Name of the institution/organisation (in English):

1.2. Country:

1.3. Respondent's name:

1.4. Respondent's job title/position:

The respondent should have an overarching view of setting-up and implementing academic career assessment procedures and practices for academic staff at organisational level. Typically, this is someone with a high-level position in the organisation's leadership and management team.

1.5. Email address:

1.6. Type of organisation:

- Public
- Private
- Other (please specify):

1.7 How would you describe the profile of your organisation? (please choose the answer(s) that fit your profile):

- Comprehensive Higher Education Institution - University
- Specialised University / Higher Education Institution (e.g. medical science, music and arts school, university of education)
- University of Applied Sciences (college-type or professional education institution which does not award PhDs, or does so in only a few disciplines)
- Technical University/University of Technology
- Open University (e.g. distance learning university)
- Research Organisation (research institute, research centre)
- Other (please specify):

1.8. How would you characterise your organisation?

- Mostly research-focused
- Mostly teaching-focused
- Research-focused and teaching-focused
- Other (please specify):

1.9. What is the total number of academic staff (full time equivalent, FTE), working at your organisation?

- < 100
- 100-499
- 500-999
- 1000-1499
- ≥ 1500

2. Is your organisation a signatory of the following documents?

	Yes	No	I do not know
San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)			
CoARA - Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment			

If 'I do not know' to DORA

If you are unsure, you may check at <https://sfdora.org/signers/>

If 'I do not know' to CoARA

If you are unsure, you may check at <https://coara.eu/agreement/signatories/>

3. Is your organisation planning, initiating or implementing a reform process on academic career assessment (either at departmental/unit level or organisational level)?

In the context of this survey, reform means a more or less formal process and includes awareness raising, implementation of smaller to larger changes in the processes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff.

- Yes
- No

If 'No'

3.1. What are the main reasons for your organisation not planning, initiating or implementation in a reform process on academic career assessment? (please explain):

SURVEY ENDS for respondents that ticked 'No'

Part 2. Academic career assessment at institutional/organisational level

Now we would like to focus on academic career assessment (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff) in your institution/organisation.

4. In your context, at which level (multiple-choice):

	Are the processes, requirements or criteria for academic career assessment (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff) developed...	Is academic career assessment (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff) performed...
At national level (e.g. by a governmental agency, ministry)?		
At the level of the institution/organisation?		
At departmental/faculty level?		
Other (please specify)?		

If 'National level - developed' is ticked

4.1. Which national organisation/agency is responsible for developing the processes, requirements or criteria for academic career assessment (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff)?

5. What are the strengths of the current academic career assessment system (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff) in your institution/organisation? Please provide up to 3 major strengths:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

6. What are the main challenges of the current academic career assessment system (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff) **in your institution/organisation? Please provide up to the 3 major challenges:**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

7. At which stage is your institution/organisation in the process of reforming academic career assessment (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff)?

- Reform processes are being considered, but a decision on the reform has not been made yet
- Reform processes are foreseen and a revision of processes is under development
- Reform processes are planned, processes have been revised and developed, but implementation has not yet started
- Reform processes are planned, processes have been revised and developed, and a piloting phase is ongoing
- Reform processes are in a transition period: processes have been revised, developed and piloted, and implementation has started
- Reform processes are well established and fully implemented across the whole organisation

8. From your institution/organisation's perspective, what have been the main motivations to engage in a reform process of academic career assessment (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff)?

9. From your institution/organisation's perspective, what are the most important elements in academic career assessment (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff) **that need to be changed?**

10. In your reform process, to which extent is your institution/organisation addressing the following actions:

(Items based on the commitments of the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#))

	Our organisation is addressing / implementing this	Our organisation is currently discussing this	Our organisation will not address this	I do not know/Not applicable
Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research				
Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators				
Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index				
Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment				
Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to				

With the direct involvement of researchers at all career stages, review and develop criteria, tools and processes for the assessment of research projects, research teams and researchers that are adapted to their context of application				
Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use				
Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond CoARA				
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				

10.1. Are there other actions that are being addressed in your institution/organisation's reform process, namely in other academic activities beyond research? (open-ended)

11. Has your institution publicly shared its plans for reforming academic career assessment?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

If 'Yes'

11.1. Please provide the web link:

Development of the reform process in the organisation

Note: in the context of this survey, reform refers to changes in processes used for the recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff.

12. What led to the reform process in your organisation? (multiple-choice)

- The reform was initiated within the organisation
- The reform was initiated together with other organisations (e.g. with similar profile, geographical proximity)
- The reform was driven by regulatory reforms at regional or national level
- The reform was inspired by best practices in other organisations or countries
- Other (please specify)

If 'The response was inspired by best practices in other organisations or countries' is ticked

12.1. What resources or other initiatives have been particularly helpful for informing or serving as inspiration for the reform processes in your institution/organisation? (open-question)

13. Which group(s) in your organisation have been the main initiators of change towards reforming academic career assessment (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff) practices? (multiple-choice)

- Early-career academics
- Mid-career academics
- Senior academics
- Organisational leadership
- Human resources staff
- Research management and administration staff
- Others (please specify)

14. Which group(s) in your organisation have shown the most resistance when it comes to engaging in academic career assessment (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff) **reforms?** (multiple-choice)

- There was no resistance in our organisation
- Early-career academics
- Mid-career academics
- Senior academics
- Organisational leadership
- Human resources staff
- Research management and administration staff
- Others (please specify)

If Q15 is not 'There was no resistance in our organisation'

Q15.1. Which were the main reasons for resistance?

15. What is the role of academic staff in the reform process?

- Academic staff (or their representatives) are actively participating in discussions on reform and in developing new processes for academic career assessment
- Academic staff (or their representatives) are consulted on the reform principles and/or steps, but are not actively involved in developing new processes for academic career assessment
- Academic staff (or their representatives) are kept informed of the reform process, but do not have an active role in the reform discussions processes or in the development of new processes for academic career assessment
- Other (please specify)

15.1 Please comment on the role of academic staff in the reform process:

16. What is the role of institutional/organisational leadership in the academic career assessment reform process (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff) **in your institution/organisation?**

17. What mechanisms has your organisation put in place to communicate on the academic career assessment reform process (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff) **to all parties involved?**

18. Has your organisation observed and/or does it expect any positive influence from the reform on:

- the quality and/or impact of research: Yes/No (please explain)
- the quality of teaching: Yes/No (please explain)
- the quality and relevance of the education offer: Yes/No (please explain)
- innovation/knowledge transfer: Yes/No (please explain)
- science communication and outreach activities (e.g. for the general public): Yes/No (please explain)
- management and administration in the organisation: Yes/No (if yes, please explain)
- the careers of academic staff: Yes/No (please explain)
- attractiveness of the organisation for prospective academic staff: Yes/No (please explain)
- other (please specify):

19. In general, what is the level of importance of the following activities in academic career assessment (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career advancement of academic staff) **in your organisation?**

Very high, high, neither high nor low, low, very low, don't know/not applicable (for each item)

	Current level of importance <i>(or before the reform process implementation)</i>	Expected level of importance after the reform process is completed
Research		
Innovation/knowledge transfer		
Education		
Supervision (e.g. undergraduate and/or graduate levels)		
Leadership (incl. managerial tasks and leadership positions in the organisation)		
Societal impact (incl. economy, society, culture, public policy or services, etc.)		
Science communication and outreach (e.g. public lectures, citizen science, collaborations with schools, public services or others)		
Other (please specify)		

20. After the reform, academic career assessment (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff) **in our institution/organisation will be primarily based on:**

- Purely qualitative assessment
- Responsible use of metrics
- Balanced use of qualitative assessment and metrics
- Not defined yet
- I do not know/ difficult to say

20.1. Please provide comments for your answer:

21. In general, how important are the following indicators for assessing academic careers (for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff) in your institution/organisation?

Responses: 1-Not at all important, 2, 3, 4, 5-Extremely important, I do not know/not applicable (for each item)

	Currently <i>(or before the reform process implementation)</i>	After the reform process is implemented
Research publications (number of publications)		
Research publication related metrics (e.g. JIF, h-index, citations)		
Acquisition of funding at national or international level (for the purposes of research, teaching or engagement with society)		
Open Science and Open Access indicators measuring the open accessibility of research outcomes and data		
Open education materials		
Mentorship/supervision of bachelor and master students, doctoral candidates or post-docs		
Membership in expert / international organisations		
Work as peer-reviewer, participation in editorial committees and other expert tasks		
Participation in ethics committees (e.g. research, animal experimentation, clinical, biosafety, etc)		
Science communication and outreach activities for the general public		
Collaborations with other higher education institutions for the purposes of research, education, innovation/knowledge transfer, or engagement with society		
Collaborations with partners outside academia for the purposes of research, education, innovation/knowledge transfer, or engagement with society		
Inter-sectoral mobility (mobility of academic staff from the higher education or research sectors to industry or other sectors of employment and vice-versa)		

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International mobility (within the higher education or research sectors)		
Dissertation or thesis reviewer, participation in dissertation/thesis defenses		
Student satisfaction and feedback		
Outcomes of teaching assessments (e.g. peer-to-peer observation, evaluation of teaching)		
Involvement in policy processes at local, regional, national or international levels (e.g. consultations for authorities, secondments, etc)		
Awards (research, education, innovation)		
Other (please specify)		

22. Does your organisation adjust or adapt the assessment criteria to different career stages of academic staff?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

22.1. Please provide comments for your answer: (open-ended)

23. In assessments for recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression, to what extent is the profile of academic staff clearly defined? How clear and specific are the criteria that need to be fulfilled for the position (e.g. are benchmarks provided, are clear targets defined)? (open-ended)

24. Are the results of the assessment process discussed with those being assessed? Do they have the opportunity to think about it and express their opinion on the outcome?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

24.1. Please provide comments for your answer: (open-ended)

Part 3. General reflections on the reform process

25. What have been the main achievements thus far in the implementation of the reform? Please elaborate your answer: _____

26. What have been the main difficulties thus far related to the implementation of the reform? Please elaborate your answer: _____

27. If your institution/organisation had a chance to repeat the reform development and/or implementation, what would it have done differently? Please elaborate your answer: _____

28. What aspects of academic career assessment are currently undervalued or missing that should be given greater consideration for a more comprehensive and meaningful assessment process?

Part 4. Final considerations

29. How have the answers to this survey been collected?

- Data was collected from several sources within the institution/organisation (e.g. different departments)
- Data is based on a single source of information within the institution/organisation (e.g. one person or one department)
- Other (please specify)

30. Please indicate other types of assessment (if any) or add any comments that you would like to share with us: _____

31. Final remarks (optional)

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Thank you for completing this survey. We appreciate the time you have spent answering the questions – this work is vital for the CoARA Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment to map current and future initiatives of reform and **draw lessons learned across multiple contexts.**

If you would like, you can go back and make changes to your answers. To submit your results now, please click the 'Submit' button below. After submitting your results, you will be automatically redirected to your responses report.

SURVEY ENDS