



**Universitat
de Lleida**

CoARA Action Plan (2025–2028)

Reforming Research Assessment

April 2025

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1. Preamble

The **University of Lleida** (UdL) became a member of the **Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment** ([CoARA](#)) in March 2023. The UdL has also publicly committed itself to revising the current procedures for responsible research assessment (RRA) by signing the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#) (ARRA) promoted by CoARA. This document describes the **Action Plan** that the UdL is committed to implementing between 2025 and 2028, which was approved by the Consell de Govern on 30 April 2025, following a process of internal consultation and participation. The guidelines provided in Support for CoARA signatories in the preparation of Action Plans have been taken into account in the preparation of this Action Plan.

2. Context

On 1 December 2022, the Coalition for the Advancement of Research Assessment (CoARA) was formally established as an international European association comprising all signatory institutions (around 370). Today (April 2025), more than 800 organizations are members of CoARA, including universities, research centres and associations, research funding agencies and national and regional research assessment agencies, as well as scientific associations and academic staff. Building on the discussions and consensus of the international community, CoARA aims to **systematically reform research assessment and improve assessment practices** through the application of common principles and clear commitments that should produce results in the coming years.

CoARA is based on a **broad consensus in the research community** that a reform of research assessment is necessary to promote sustainable research quality and strengthen research cultures. CoARA stems from initiatives such as the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA, 2013), the Leiden Manifesto (2015) and the Metric Tide Report (2016), which have unanimously highlighted the consequences of poor research assessment practices, including the application of narrow quality criteria leading to biased incentives and unbearable pressures on researchers. CoARA's focus is on '**responsible research assessment**', an umbrella term for assessment approaches that encourage, reflect and reward the pluralistic characteristics of high quality research in order to support diverse and inclusive research cultures. While responsible research assessment practices should help to keep pace with the increasing demands placed on research by the many societal, environmental, democratic and economic challenges we face, CoARA recognises that these practices are **context sensitive**, meaning that research organisations retain their autonomy and can design assessments that promote their institutional values.

The work of CoARA is organized into groups dealing with specific topics, such as academic careers, infrastructure, multilingualism, and accountability metrics, and also

into national chapters. In Spain, the **Spanish National Chapter** was officially launched in February 2024 under the leadership of 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 the support of the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, and with the participation of 76 organizations, including the UdL. The Spanish Chapter has taken into account the contributions made in the National Forum on Reforming Research Assessment, which met in Barcelona in January 2023.

3. Reforming Research Assessment

The **primary objective** of this Action Plan is to improve the quality and impact of the research carried out at the UdL by aligning it with the CoARA commitments. To this end, the Action Plan will be based on the following general principles¹:

- *Adhere to ethics and integrity rules and practices* as a matter of the highest priority.
- *Safeguard the freedom of scientific research* and respect the autonomy of research organisations.
- *Ensure the independence and transparency* of the data, infrastructure and criteria needed to evaluate research and determine its impact.
- *Focus research assessment criteria on quality*, rewarding originality of ideas, professional research conduct and results beyond the state of the art.
- *Reward research behaviours that support open science practices* such as data sharing and open collaboration within science and societal stakeholders.
- *Recognise the contributions that advance knowledge* and the (potential) impact of research results, prioritising quality over quantity.
- *Use assessment criteria and procedures that respect the diversity* of scientific disciplines, types of research and career stages, and that recognise multi-, inter- and transdisciplinarity.
- *Ensure gender equality, equal opportunities and inclusiveness*, as well as diversity in a broader sense (e.g. ethnic origin, sexual orientation, socio-economic, disability) at all levels.

The Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA) promoted by CoARA is based on the implementation of **ten commitments**, divided into four core commitments and six supporting commitments. Shared commitments to research assessment reform, to be achieved by signatory institutions within an agreed timeframe of five years from 2024, will enable recognition of the different outcomes, practices and activities that maximise the quality of research and its resulting impact, facilitate a move away from the inappropriate use of journal- and publication-based metrics, and strengthen trust in research.

Commitments 1 to 4 form the core of the Reform Agreement, and all subsequent actions in this Action Plan implicitly incorporate them. They provide a common direction for the reform of research assessment, while respecting the autonomy of organisations. These commitments are¹:

- 1. Recognize** the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research.
- 2. Base** research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.
- 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.
- 4. Avoid** the use of rankings of research organizations in research assessment.

The six supporting commitments are developed in detail in section 5 (“Actions”) of this Action Plan. The implementation of the CoARA commitments in UdL will involve a multi-stage approach, as follows:

- 1. Overseeing the implementation of the CoARA commitments** through a committee or task force (hereafter referred to as the CoARA Committee) composed of representatives of PDI staff (teaching and research) and PAS staff (administration).
- 2. Review current practices and develop procedures** that are consistent with the CoARA commitments by emphasising the quality and impact of research, promoting open access, and recognising the diversity of research contributions.
- 3. Organise information sessions** on the new procedures for PDI (Teaching and Research) and PTGAS (Technical, Management and Administration and Services) staff about the new procedures to ensure understanding of the CoARA commitments and how they will be implemented.
- 4. Progressively implement changes** in the way research is evaluated and how researchers are recognised and rewarded.
- 5. Regularly monitor and adjust** the implementation of the CoARA commitments and gather feedback from staff to make necessary adjustments.
- 6. Regularly communicate progress** on implementation to members of the institution, ensuring transparency and fostering a culture of openness and collaboration.

4. Our vision

4.1 Open Science at the UdL

Open Science is at the heart of European research policy, and the UdL is committed to promoting and supporting Open Science within the institution. The UdL’s contribution to this movement is included in the Strategic Plan of the University of Lleida 2030 and

is concretised by the **Open Science Policy of the University of Lleida** approved by its Governing Council in February 2023². The UdL Open Science Policy precedes and is in line with the Catalan Strategy for Open Science³, which was approved in December 2023. The policy focuses on the following areas of action: open access, research data, open educational resources, and citizen science, which are at the heart of the CoARA principle of *Diversity, inclusiveness and collaboration* in the assessment of research.

4.2 Scope

The UdL's commitment to responsible research assessment applies **across the institution** to processes and procedures in which research assessment takes place. In addition, the UdL is mindful of the existing environment for research assessment at international and national levels.

At the national level, the criteria for the evaluation of teaching and research staff are currently under review, following the changes introduced by LOSU (“Ley Orgánica 2/2023, de 22 de marzo, del Sistema Universitario”) and Royal Legislative Decree 678/2023. This is an ongoing process that is expected to continue over the next few years, and will have a direct impact on the internal evaluation processes for PDI staff at the UdL, which are also affected by current Catalan policies based on LUC (“Llei 1/2003, de 19 de febrer, d'universitats de Catalunya”), such as the Serra Húnter programme, an academic excellence programme that follows a selection process in line with international standards. For this reason, this Action Plan does not explicitly include the evaluation of the research activities of the teaching and research staff of our University. However, the Action Plan remains open to updating its scope following the planned annual reviews.

In fact, the focus is on the revision and refinement of the UdL's **internal competitive research-related calls**, such as the assignment of technical support staff to research groups, the Transitional Research Projects, or the selection of pre- and post-doctoral researchers, among others. The evaluation of internal calls under the umbrella of the CoARA principles will also be in line with the University of Lleida's Strategic Plan 2030, of which Open Science is a cornerstone.

4.3 Continuous improvement through assessment

Among the underlying principles of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment, the signatories agree to “**regularly demonstrate progress** towards reviewing, developing and evaluating criteria, tools and processes that fulfil the core Commitments, with a touch point at end of 2027 or within five years of signing the Agreement, by which time they will have worked through at least one cycle of review and development of their assessment criteria, tools and processes.” The Action Plan presented here is in line with the principle of review and updating, which will be inspired by a catalogue of good practices in continuous development at Catalan, national (through the Spanish National Chapter), European and international levels.

Activities will also be undertaken to enable these good practices to be shared both internally and externally.

5. Actions

5.1 Outline

The key actions of the UdL Action Plan 2025-2028 are summarized in the following table, which shows the six CoARA supporting commitments, the related action lines, the actions included in these lines, the timeframe and responsible party for each action, and the method of assessment.

Commitment	Action lines	Action	Timeframe	Responsible	Assessment
5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organizational changes committed to.	Implement changes in research assessment, including planning and progress monitoring.	CoARA Action Plan implementation and update.	2025-2028	CoARA Committee	Bi-annual meetings and preparation of the annual report.
		Implementation of the institutional Open Science Policy Document.	2025-2028	Open Science Committee	Annual review and update.
		Annual monitoring of the Action Plan by the UdL Research Committee and the Vice-Rectorate for Research.	2025-2028	UdL Research Committee (RC)	Monitoring of the annual report.

	Support the necessary infrastructure for the transparent collection and processing of data on research assessment practices.	New research portal as a basic infrastructure for communication, analyse and dissemination of scientific activities.	2025	IT and Communications Service & Library and Documentation Unit	Review after one year following implementation and update, if needed.
		Interoperability between CORA (Catalan Open Research Area) and the new research portal.	2025	IT and Communications Service & Library and Documentation Unit	
6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes.	Revision and continuous updating of internal research calls (travel grants, Transitional Research Projects....) and for pre- and post-doctoral candidates in line with CoARA guidelines.	Gradually introduce a research evaluation system based not only on quantitative criteria but also on objective qualitative criteria. This should be adapted for each call according to its specificities (young researchers, less socially visible disciplines, etc.).	2025-2028	UdL Research Committee (RC)	Explicit endorsement of the call by the CoARA Committee followed by an annual review and analysis of the results from a CoARA perspective.
		Incorporate different expert points of view through panels that take into account the qualitative and quantitative value of the merits and	2025-2028	RC	

		the diversity of the fields of knowledge, taking into account aspects such as the multilingualism of the contributions or the recognition of local studies or those written in Catalan.			
		Consider Open Science compliance as a condition for proposals in internal calls.	2025-2028	RC	
		Use and adapt the new research portal to evaluate the internal calls, not only at the data level (articles, theses...), but also in terms of qualitative and open science aspects.	2025-2028	IT and Communications Service & Library and Documentation Unit	
7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria	Internal strategy for communicating the CoARA rationale.	Internal consultation and collection and analysis of changes.	2025	CoARA Committee	Public exhibition and discussion of the draft CoARA Action Plan.

and processes as well as their use.					
	Disseminating the Action Plan.	Development of a specific communication strategy.	2025-2028	CoARA Committee	Communication strategy.
	Training in the CoARA principles.	Training actions related to research assessment & Open Science.	2025-2028	Library and Documentation Unit & Doctoral School	Yearly training activities.
8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition.	Information sharing and mutual learning within CoARA.	Participation in CoARA's General Assembly.	2025-2028	CoARA Committee	Annual summary of participation.
		Participation in CoARA's Spanish Chapter.	2025-2028	CoARA Committee	

		Participation in CoARA working groups and/or other similar national or international initiatives.	2025-2028	CoARA Committee	
9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments.	Monitoring and updating of progress to be made publicly available.	CoARA Action Plan to be published internally and externally.	2025	CoARA Committee	Publication of the CoARA Action Plan on the UdL website and in the Zenodo and UdL open repositories after approval.
		CoARA Action Plan to be regularly updated on compliance and progress.	2025-2028	CoARA Committee	Report annually on progress through the Action Plan and update as necessary.
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.	Data sharing for evaluation of alternative research assessments.	Practices, criteria, tools and results of internal calls made publicly available.	2025-2028	CoARA Committee	Publication on the UdL website.

5.2 Management and supervision

Actions to reform research assessment are the responsibility of the UdL's Vice-Rectorate for Research. The CoARA Action Plan 2025-2028 has been prepared by an *ad hoc* committee or task force (i.e. the CoARA Committee) composed of the Deputy Vice-Rector for Research, one PDI representative from each of the four strategic areas of the UdL (Agri-food [represented by the Deputy Vice-Rector], Biomedicine, Social and Territorial Development, and Technology and Sustainability), one PTGAS representative from the Library and Documentation Unit and one PTGAS representative from the Research Grants Management Unit. The plan is **open for discussion** according to the following stages:

- Review by the Vice-Rector for Research and the UdL Research Committee
- Review by the UdL Executive Board
- Internal consultation open to the entire University community
- Approval by the UdL Governing Council

The CoARA Committee will be responsible for the **annual implementation, monitoring and updating of the plan**. Twice a year, the CoARA Committee will review the details of the actions undertaken in collaboration with the different actors involved (doctoral school, units and services). During the following six months, all completed and planned actions will be evaluated. The CoARA Committee may update or delete actions and add new ones according to the needs of the UdL, after the necessary consultation. The annual report on activities, highlighting any relevant changes to the plan, must be submitted to the UdL Research Committee and Executive Board for review and made publicly available through CoARA.

6. References

- 1 Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA) (2022) Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).
- 2 Política de Ciència Oberta de la Universitat de Lleida (2023) Universitat de Lleida.
- 3 Estratègia catalana de ciència oberta: compartir el coneixement (2023) Departament de Recerca i Universitats. Generalitat de Catalunya.