



**Universitat
de Lleida**

CoARA Action Plan (2025–2028)

Reforming Research Assessment

February 1st, 2025
(consolidated draft)

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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 xx yyyy 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 (early 2025), more than 750 organizations are members of CoARA, including universities, research centres and associations, research funding 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 misapplication 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 approaches to assessment that encourage, reflect and reward the pluralistic characteristics of high quality research in support of 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.

CoARA's work is organized into groups dealing with specific topics, including e.g. 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 January 2023 in Barcelona.

3. Reforming Research Assessment

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

- *Adhere to ethics and integrity rules and practices* as a matter of the highest priority.
- *Safeguard freedom of scientific research* and respect the autonomy of research organisations.
- *Ensure independence and transparency* of the data, infrastructure and criteria necessary for research assessment and for determining research impacts.
- *Focus research assessment criteria on quality*, and reward the originality of ideas, the professional research conduct, and results beyond the state-of-the-art.
- *Reward research behaviour underpinning open science practices* such as data sharing as well as open collaboration within science and with societal actors.
- *Recognise the contributions that advance knowledge* and the (potential) impact of research results, prioritising quality over quantity.
- *Use assessment criteria and processes 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* and take into account diversity in the 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 within an agreed timeframe of five years from 2024 for signatory institutions, 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 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 will be 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. Oversee the implementation of the CoARA commitments** through a committee or task force (hereafter CoARA Committee) composed of representatives of PDI staff (teaching and research) and PAS staff (administration).
- 2. Review current practices and develop new 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 informative sessions** addressed to 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 centre of European research policy, and the UdL is committed to promoting and supporting Open Science within the institution. The UdL contribution to this movement is included in the Strategic Plan of the University of Lleida 2030 and is

made concrete through the **Open Science Policy of the University of Lleida** approved by its Governing Council in February 2023². The Open Science Policy of the UdL 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 CoARA's 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 takes into account 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 assessment 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 assessment 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 here presented is in line with the principle of revision 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 such good practices to become shared both internally and externally.

5. Actions

5.1 Outline

The key actions of the UdL Action Plan 2025-2028 are compiled in the following table, which shows the six CoARA supporting commitments, the related action lines, the actions included in these lines, the time frame and responsible of 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 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 to communicate, analyse and disseminate 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 update of internal calls for research activities (travel grants, transitional research projects....) and for pre- and post-doctoral candidates in line with CoARA precepts	Implement a research evaluation system based not only on quantitative criteria but also on qualitative criteria. This should be adapted for each call according to its specificities	2025-2028	UdL Research Committee (RC)	Explicit support of the call by the CoARA Committee followed by annual review plus analysis of results from a CoARA perspective
		Move towards a more qualitative global evaluation and in the evaluation of quantitative data, incorporating the contributions of	2025-2028	RC	

		different expert points of view. This has to include the introduction of panels that take into account the qualitative opinions of the different evaluators when assessing the proposals, as well as aspects such as, for example, multilingualism in the contributions or the recognition of local studies.			
		Consider open science compliance as a condition for proposals in internal calls	2025-2028	RC	
		Use and adapt the new research portal to obtain the necessary elements to evaluate each internal call, 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 and processes as well as their use.	Internal strategy for communicating the CoARA rationale	Internal consultation and collection and analysis of amendments	2025	CoARA Committee	Public exhibition and discussion of the draft CoARA Action Plan
	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 whole University community
- Approval by the UdL Governing Council

The CoARA Committee will be in charge of the **annual implementation, supervision and updating of the plan**. Twice a year, the CoARA Committee will review the details of the actions undertaken in collaboration with e.g. the Doctoral School and the relevant departments and units. 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 consideration 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.