

CoARA Action Plan for the Technical University of Delft

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Introduction

TU Delft advocates the use of more qualitative review methods to avoid inappropriate use of publication-based metrics. Moreover, the university endorses national and international initiatives on advancing responsible methods of research assessments. TU Delft is a signatory of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA), the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the Dutch programme on Recognition and Rewards . Via these programmes, TU Delft is contributing to how research (and its broader impact) is assessed.

Strategic vision and mission TU Delft

Vision

TU Delft contributes to solving complex and urgent societal challenges through the education of highly qualified engineers who are creative, innovative and responsible, by pushing the boundaries of technical sciences, by developing innovative applications, and by fostering entrepreneurship.

Mission

TU Delft conducts research at a world-class level by combining groundbreaking science, pioneering technologies and human-centred designs in a socially responsible manner. This enables TU Delft to make a real impact towards building a sustainable society. TU Delft educates people to prepare them for a career as professional, highly qualified and reputable engineers, and develop and enhance the expertise of technical leaders throughout their careers. TU Delft develops technology-based innovations for some of our society's biggest challenges. TU Delft encourages entrepreneurship and proactively interacts with leading national and international institutions, companies and societal partners, while also keeping our close ties to the Delft region. TU Delft continuously works towards improving our collective effectiveness, performance and organisational resilience by applying the following values as our guiding principles.¹

Reforming research assessment at different levels will stimulate recognising and rewarding all scientific contributions to make impact for society by making responsible use of quantitative indicators and qualitative indicators.

The Agreement on reforming research assessment distinguishes three levels of research assessment:

1. Individual researchers: assessment of research activities through hiring, career promotions, performance assessments.
2. Departments of TU Delft: assessment of research activities through accreditation processes.
3. University of the whole: assessment of research activities through rankings.

Focus areas of reforming research assessment criteria

1. Individual level: Recognition & Rewards Programme

TU Delft wants to hold on to the international recognition it receives for its excellent quality of education and research. The efforts and achievements of academic staff are still largely assessed internationally on quantitative factors, such as the number of published articles, citations, or through the H-index. TU Delft sees this as an undesirable reality of today's scientific system and believes it is

¹ Strategic Agenda TU Delft 2024-2030 'Impact for a sustainable society'

important to broaden the methods for determining academic quality and impact. This requires a greater balance in valuing and recognising the broad spectrum of scientific activities and accomplishments of academics.

Over the next few years, TU Delft will work closely with other Dutch universities and research funders on a new method of assessing the quality and impact of research and education. With that goal in mind, TU Delft has joined the national “[Room for everyone’s talent in practice](#)” roadmap and its programme structure, and the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#).¹

The roadmap ‘Room for everyone’s talent in practice’ focusses on five ambitions:

1. Diversifying and vitalising career paths
2. Focusing on quality
3. Achieving balance between individuals and the collective
4. Stimulating open science
5. Stimulating academic leadership

TU Delft has made a detailed plan to reach these ambitions with the ‘TU Delft Recognition & Rewards perspective 2021-2024’. TU Delft will continue the Recognition & Rewards Programme to achieve more balanced recognition of talent by updating the academic position criteria with, among others, new methods of research assessments, room for diversification of career paths, more focus on leadership for academic staff and contributions to open and team science.

2. Department level: Strategy Evaluation Protocol

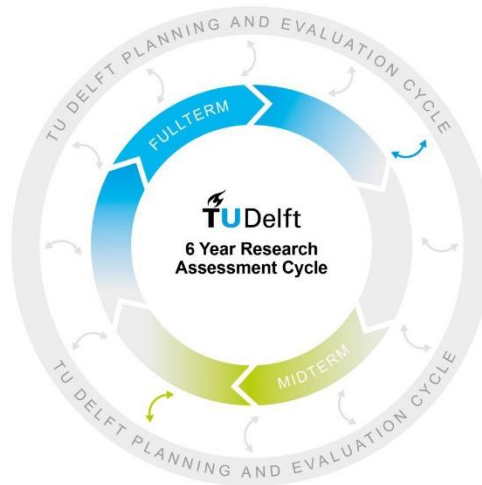
At TU Delft we use the national [Strategy Evaluation Protocol](#) for research assessment at the departmental level (each of TU Delft’s eight faculties is composed of at least three departments). The protocol is drawn up by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (UNL), the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Royal Academy of Sciences (KNAW).

The main goal of a Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP) evaluation is to evaluate a research unit in light of its own aims and strategy. An assessment committee of independent experts assesses the performance of the unit based on the self-evaluation and a site visit. In the self-evaluation the department reflects on its aims, strategy and achievement during the previous six years as well as its aims and strategy for the future in a coherent, narrative argument, supported wherever possible, with factual evidence derived from well-substantiated indicators.

The evaluation committee uses three main assessment criteria: 1) research quality, 2) societal relevance and 3) viability. The committee additionally evaluates the following four specific aspects: 1) Open Science, 2) PhD Policy and Training, 3) Academic Culture and 4) Human Resources Policy in concert with the main assessment criteria.

Based on the self-evaluation and the site visit the independent committee reports to the Executive Board. Subsequently, the Executive Board presents its official position and the department draws up a proposal to implement the committee’s recommendations.

The evaluation is part of a broader quality assurance cycle, involving the faculty and the Executive Board. In addition to the formal SEP evaluation taking place every 6 years, TU Delft also organises a mid-term assessment three years after the main evaluation.



More information as well as planning & results: <https://www.tudelft.nl/en/research/our-research-vision/quality-assurance>

The protocol is renewed every 6 years. The current protocol (2021-2027) took into account the vision articulated in the position paper 'Room for everyone's talent' and it explicitly follows the guidelines of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). One of the consequences is that grades are no longer used in the assessment. Narratives in the self-evaluation are supported by (numerical) indicators fitting with the departments' strategy and aims. The Association of Universities in the Netherlands (UNL), the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Royal Academy of Sciences (KNAW) are reviewing the current protocol and gearing up for the next renewal.

3. University level: communication about limitations of rankings

Many organisations compile rankings and a university's position can vary considerably from one ranking to another. TU Delft is mainly interested in three international rankings and follows their developments. These are the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranking, the Times Higher Education (THE) ranking and the Shanghai Ranking (ARWU). As a university of technology, TU Delft mostly values the Engineering & Technology subject rankings, but also other relevant subject rankings such as Architecture, Aerospace Engineering and Environmental Sciences. Ranking results don't and should never trickle down into assessment on the department or individual level or into discussions concerning research policy.

TU Delft is aware of and therefore communicates about the limitation of rankings. However, keeping this in mind, rankings still can be of use for the university. For instance, they can be used to benchmark universities and to identify and follow international trends. Furthermore, (international) students and staff consider rankings positions when they make choices where to study or work.

TU Delft will continue to communicate ranking positions and to use the developments in relevant data underlying ranking positions as a benchmark tool for the foreseeable future. TU Delft will also continue clear communication about the limitations of rankings and will continue to avoid their use in research assessment in line with CoARA commitment 4.

Focus areas mapping CoARA core commitments

CoARA commitment	Focus area
1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of research	1
2. Base research assessment primary on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators	1, 2, 3
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	1, 2, 3
4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisation in research assessment	2,3

The following supporting commitments will be part of the action plan and implementation process of all focus areas:

- Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to;
- Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes;
- 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 the Coalition;
- Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments;
- Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-to-the-art in research on research, and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research.

Action planning 2024-2027

Action	2024	2025	2026	2027
Individual level				
Implement Roadmap Room for everyone's Talent				
Update Academic Position criteria and diversifying career paths				
Implement Leadership programmes for academic staff				
Action plan of R&R of open and team science				
Department level				
SEP evaluations of the departments within the faculties of Mechanical Engineering (2025), Industrial Design Engineering (2025) and Aerospace Engineering (2027)				
Midterm evaluations of most departments				
Through UNL involved in the evaluation of the SEP 2021-2027				
Through UNL involved with the development of the SEP 2027-2033				
University level				

Follow and learn from the developments around rankings within the other Dutch universities.				
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