

**Version 1.0 / November 2024**

The action plan has been approved by, and will be updated by the University's [Open Science Task Force](#) and the Vice-Rector for Research Policy.

Commitment	Scope	Action*	Timeframe
<p><b>1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research</b></p> <p>Purpose: This commitment will broaden recognition of the diverse practices, activities and careers in research, considering the specific nature of research disciplines and other research endeavours.</p>	<p><b>Changes in assessment practices should enable recognition of the broad diversity of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>valuable contributions that researchers make to science and for the benefit of society, including diverse outputs beyond journal publications and irrespective of the language in which they are communicated;</li> <li>practices that contribute to the robustness, openness, transparency and the inclusiveness of research and the research process including: peer review, teamwork and collaboration;</li> <li>activities including teaching, leadership, supervision, training and mentoring.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Past activities paving the way for current projects:</b></p> <p>KU Leuven established its <a href="#">Open Science Task Force</a> in 2019 to coordinate efforts in promoting and sustaining Open Science. Operating under the umbrella of this taskforce is the Working Group “Impact on HR policy and Excellence”. This WG is led by the head of HR and the head of the Research Office. Its primary aim is to evaluate current assessment practices for their alignment with new insights, including Open Science, the role of metrics, Team Science, and the diversity of career paths in academia.</p> <p>Already in 2018, KU Leuven introduced the biosketch in hiring and promotion procedures for senior academics, enabling staff to emphasize what they deem relevant in the fields of research, education and engagement. Similarly, exhaustive publication lists were abandoned in favour of an overview of a maximum of five realisations chosen by the applicant, with guidance suggesting the inclusion of outputs other than journal articles (datasets,</p>	<p>(2019)</p> <p>(2018)</p>

	<p>It is also important that assessment facilitates the <b>recognition and valorisation of diverse roles and careers in research</b>, including: data steward, software engineer and data scientist roles, technical roles, public outreach, science diplomacy, science advice and science communicator roles to name a few.</p> <p>It is recognised that current practice is often too narrow and limiting, so the goal cannot be to replace the narrow criteria we wish to move away from with different but equally narrow criteria. Instead, the <b>aim is to allow organisations to broaden the spectrum of what they value in research</b>, while acknowledging that this may vary across disciplines and that each individual researcher should not be expected to contribute to all activities at once.</p>	<p>valorization activities, a MOOC, a citizen science project etc.).</p> <p>In 2020, valuable bottom-up feedback from the Research Policy Council, an independent body consisting of department heads and vice deans of research, relating to the role of Open Science in the assessment of research(ers), was included in promotion procedures.</p> <p>KU Leuven was a driving force behind the 2020 LERU paper <a href="#">A Pathway towards Multidimensional Academic Careers. A LERU Framework for the Assessment of Researchers</a>, authored by Bert Overlaet, former head of the HR department and member of the Working Group “Impact on HR policy and excellence”.</p> <p>The university obtained the European HR Excellence in Research (HRS4R) accreditation in 2022 based on its current policy and a comprehensive action plan, including a focus on Open Science in the evaluation of researchers.</p> <p>KU Leuven signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and became a member of CoARA in 2022.</p> <p><b>More recently</b> the Open Science WG “Impact on HR Policy and Excellence” has been working in close collaboration with HR on a <a href="#">new Framework for Recognising and Valuing High-Quality Academic Work</a>. Academic leadership, teamwork, development &amp; innovation, and sharing knowledge are considered dimensions that should be addressed in hiring and promotion procedures or in the allocation of research project funding. This framework was validated by all academics acting as evaluator and approved by the Executive Board, and is now broadly communicated.</p>	<p>(2020)</p> <p>(2020)</p> <p>(2022)</p> <p>(2022)</p> <p>2022-2024</p>
--	---	--	--

		<p>The next stage will be to provide guidance on how to evaluate these dimensions, taking into account discipline, career stage and career path (cf. section 6.2).</p> <p><b>Currently</b> the WG “Impact on HR Policy and Excellence” is focusing on promoting and evaluating Team Science. KU Leuven wishes to stress that working in a team and contributing to team efforts is as important as individual performance, excellence or impact. Parallel to this initiative, the five Flemish Universities (supported by the Flemish Interuniversity Council – VLIR) cooperate in drafting a framework and assessment guide for the evaluation of teams. Both projects explicitly acknowledge the importance of all roles, including ‘supporting’ roles such as science communication, datamanagement, lab technicians, clinical staff that may constitute a successful team.</p> <p>Specifically for young researchers, KU Leuven offers exhaustive training and coaching, focusing, among other things, on the importance of diversity in research teams, and on the diverse potential career paths for young researchers. These initiatives help to shape young researchers’ mindset, and help them to recognize the need and value of diverse contributions and careers in research.</p> <p>These initiatives enable(d) a more diverse pool of applications, respecting individual choices, including non-traditional career paths, and discipline-specific performance.</p>	<p>2024-</p> <p>2023-</p> <p>2023-</p>
<p><b>2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by</b></p>	<p><b>Research assessment should rely primarily on</b> qualitative assessment for which peer review is central, supported by responsibly used quantitative indicators where appropriate. <b>Peer review is the most robust</b></p>	<p>The initiatives listed under section 1 emphasize that the evaluation of research and researchers, both at the individual and team level, is primarily based on peer review, using tools such as a narrative CV, biosketch, and/or project description</p>	<p>Continuous monitoring</p>

<p><b>responsible use of quantitative indicators</b></p> <p>Purpose: This commitment will enable the move towards research assessment criteria that focus primarily on quality, while recognising that responsible use of quantitative indicators can support assessment where meaningful and relevant, which is context dependent.</p>	<p><b>method known for assessing quality and has the advantage that it is in the hands of the research community.</b></p> <p>It is important that peer review processes are designed to meet the fundamental <b>principles of rigor and transparency</b>: expert assessment, transparency, impartiality, appropriateness, confidentiality, integrity and ethical considerations, gender, equality and diversity.</p> <p>To address the biases and imperfections to which any method is prone, the research community re-assesses and improves peer review practices regularly. Revised, or potentially new, criteria, tools and processes appropriate for assessing quality could be explored alongside peer review.</p> <p><b>Moving towards assessment practices that rely more heavily on qualitative methods may require additional efforts from researchers.</b> Researchers should be recognised for these efforts and their contributions to reviewing peers' work should be valued as part of their career progression.</p>	<p>While KU Leuven reports on bibliometric indicators (cf. section 3), the primary role of peer review is stressed in the guidance accompanying all briefing material. Additionally, the (multi-disciplinary) assessment panels function as self-regulatory mechanisms to prevent uninformed use of any metrics.</p> <p>By organizing training courses for all members of our selection and assessment committees, we aim to strengthen the selection and decision-making competencies of these committee members, thus substantiating the decision made. They learn how to avoid the pitfalls of conflicts of interest, how to be aware of (implicit) biases and group dynamics, and feel empowered to provide feedback based on good practices and discussions about cases.</p> <p>Being member or chair of an assessment committee is taken into account as an explicit part of the engagement dimension in the KU Leuven assessment framework.</p> <p>Further actions are outlined in section 3.</p>	<p>Continuous monitoring</p> <p>Continuous monitoring</p>
<p><b>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</b></p> <p>Purpose: This commitment will reduce the dominance of a narrow</p>	<p>Inappropriate uses of journal- and publication-based metrics in research assessment should be abandoned. In particular, this means <b>moving away from using metrics like the Journal Impact Factor (JIF), Article Influence Score (AIS) and h-index as proxies for quality and impact.</b> 'Inappropriate uses' include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>relying exclusively on author-based metrics (e.g. counting papers,</li> </ul>	<p>In 2022, KU Leuven developed <a href="#">a policy on the responsible use of metrics in research assessment</a> with explicit references to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment, the Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics, and the Hong Kong Principles for Assessing Researchers. Evaluators and the evaluated are encouraged to consult <a href="#">practical guidelines</a> and a <a href="#">checklist</a> to assess the appropriateness of metrics they use or that are being used in an assessment procedure. Attention is drawn to</p>	<p>(2022)</p>

<p>set of quantitative journal- and publication-based metrics.</p>	<p>patents, citations, grants, etc.) to assess quality and/or impact;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>assessing outputs based on metrics relating to publication venue, format or language;</li> </ul> <p>relying on any other metrics that do not properly capture quality and/or impact.</p>	<p>discipline-specific indicators and the need for normalization.</p> <p>The recently published LERU paper on <a href="#">Next-generation metrics for Scientific and Scholarly Research in Europe</a> was co-authored by a KU Leuven scientometric expert, Koenraad Debackere, and serves as a baseline against which the current use of metrics and rankings at the university is evaluated. A draft action plan is in preparation for debate amongst policymakers.</p> <p>Broad training in the form of webinars and hands-on info sessions is being developed, aimed at understanding the responsible use of metrics, and how to use metrics to support a personal CV, with specific guidance tailored for early career researchers.</p>	<p>2024</p> <p>2024-</p> <p>2024-</p>
<p><b>4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment</b></p> <p>Purpose: This commitment will help avoid that metrics used by international rankings, which are inappropriate <b>for assessing researchers</b>, trickle down to research and researcher assessment. It will help the research community and research organisations regain the autonomy to shape assessment practices, rather than having to abide by criteria and methodologies set by external commercial companies. This could include retaining control over ranking methodologies and data.</p>	<p>Recognising that <b>the international rankings most often referred to by research organisations are currently not ‘fair and responsible’</b>, the criteria these rankings use should not trickle down to the evaluation of individual researchers, research teams and research units. Research organisations should also be mindful that public communication (e.g. the active advertising of an institution’s rank) can contribute to the perception that research quality conflates with ranking positions.</p> <p>Where ranking approaches are deemed unavoidable, as may be the case in forms of evaluation beyond the scope of this Agreement such as benchmarking and performance reviews of countries or institutions, the methodological limitations of such approaches should be acknowledged, and institutions should avoid trickle-down</p>	<p>Rankings are not used as indicators in the evaluation of researchers at KU Leuven because of their problematic nature. Whenever ranking data are requested at higher levels of aggregation, the Research Office systematically includes a disclaimer pointing out the severe limitations of the methodology in substantiating certain claims. Higher management is also made aware of these issues.</p> <p>A website with more detailed info on why not to use rankings as a KPI is in the making.</p>	<p>Continuous monitoring</p> <p>2024</p>

	effects on research and researcher assessment.		
<p><b>5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to</b></p> <p>Purpose: This commitment will ensure that organisations allocate the necessary resources, whether in the form of budget or staff capacity, to improve research assessment practices within their agreed timeframe.</p>	<p><b>Resource allocation by assessment authorities and research funding and performing organisations</b> is a necessary condition for reforming assessment practices. Resources should be allocated as is needed for each organisation to achieve the changes that will enable adherence to the Principles and to implement the Commitments. This includes resources to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implement changes in research assessment, including planning and progress monitoring;</li> <li>• raise awareness among all actors;</li> <li>• educate, train and support researchers and any other staff involved in assessment, including peer-reviewers and assessors; and</li> <li>• support the necessary infrastructure such as tools and services for the transparent collection and processing of data on research assessment practices.</li> </ul> <p>Particular attention should be paid to making resources available to enable the engagement of researchers at all career stages in reforming research assessment.</p>	<p>Both higher management officials and researchers, as well as research support staff, make up the Working Group “Impact on HR Policy and Excellence” referred to in section 1.</p> <p>Staff at the HR Office and the Research Office jointly support the necessary pilots, policy drafts, and development of infrastructure (in collaboration with IT services) to provide a sound basis for any reform in research assessment. This is done alongside training and guidelines for researchers and evaluators on how to use indicators and metrics in a responsible way. Training courses by external consultants are occasionally organized for the members of evaluating councils (e.g. on implicit bias in evaluation processes).</p> <p>The efforts of researchers who are members or chairs of an assessment committees are being taken into account as an explicit part of the engagement dimension in the KU Leuven assessment framework, thus supporting the continued engagement of these necessary roles.</p> <p>Input for and validation of the <a href="#">new Framework for Recognising and Valuing High-Quality Academic Work</a> have been extensively solicited by HR, addressing all boards of assessment and asking explicit feedback from the researchers attending the 2023 edition of the KU Leuven Open Science Day.</p>	



		<p>As stated in section 1, KU Leuven promotes Team Science. Teams can be small organizational units, but also ad-hoc collaborations across the organizational chart. Currently, a vision text is being drafted for agreement by the Executive Board. In parallel, based on feedback from experts in Team Science and academics across all career stages, guidance on how to evaluate Team Science will be developed, and communicated to assessment &amp; hiring boards.</p> <p>At the Flemish level, all five universities collaborate on guidance for funders to evaluate research teams and Team Science.</p>	<p>2023-</p> <p>2023-</p>
<p><b>6.2 CRITERIA FOR PROJECTS AND RESEARCHERS</b></p> <p><b>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</b></p> <p>Purpose: This commitment will enable recognition of the diverse research activities and practices through the revision and development of assessment criteria, tools, and processes. It will ensure that organisations review their processes and make tangible changes by developing existing or new assessment approaches, individually or in collaboration with others, in accordance with the Principles.</p>	<p><b>Criteria, tools and processes should be reviewed and developed together with researchers in different disciplines and at different career stages;</b> and should enable recognition of the diversity of research activities and practices that contribute to research quality, including diverse outputs in different languages. This should increase the ability to assess quality by enabling recognition of all contributions to quality research from research projects and by researchers and research teams. This includes recognition of early sharing of data and results, open collaboration, and teamwork.</p> <p>Reformed practices for assessing individual researchers should consider future potential alongside track record and take into account researchers' individual contexts and careers.</p>	<p>The <a href="#">new Framework for Recognising and Valuing High-Quality Academic Work</a> referred to in section 1 was developed in close collaboration with academic staff, both in the role of evaluators and those being evaluated. Several iterative consultations resulted in a framework fully supported by the community. This framework stresses four dimensions: academic leadership, teamwork, development &amp; innovation, and knowledge sharing, taking into account personal circumstances (life choices, periods of absence, etc.), disciplinary background, career stage, and career path.</p> <p>As a next stage in this reform the Working Group "Impact on HR Policy and Excellence" will examine activities and indicators that can serve as guidance or inspiration for researchers in their pursuit of academic research, education &amp; engagement, or to highlight during assessment. The outcome of this analysis will be discussed with policy bodies, evaluation councils, and</p>	<p>2022-2024</p> <p>2024-</p>



	<p>They should also recognise that researchers cannot excel in all types of tasks and provide for a framework that allows researchers to contribute to the definition of their research goals and aspirations. Research assessment by research funders should consider disciplinary, multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary research as well as contributions to knowledge generation and scientific, technological, economic, cultural and societal impact.</p>	<p>groups of researchers to ensure support from the academic community.</p> <p>The results will subsequently be incorporated into the templates used by HR or evaluation councils for the evaluation of research(ers), in collaboration with IT-services.</p> <p>Both in the new framework and in the current draft of the KU Leuven vision text on Team Science, it is made abundantly clear that academics cannot excel in all tasks at the same time. Room is made for individual career choices, and working in teams is encouraged to ensure high quality work as a group, where roles and foci can be shifted among the team members.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Internal Regulations</a> for the evaluating councils at KU Leuven stress the following important element for the composition of the councils: “diversity in the composition is important, both in respect of academic seniority and of the scale and established character of the research group(s) to which the members belong”.</p> <p>For the internal evaluation of research applications on strategic basic research and applied research with economic/societal valorisation potential, the evaluating council consists of both academic personnel and people from the industry/societal actors to offer a broad evaluation of both the scientific work plan of the project and the valorisation potential.</p> <p>KU Leuven continually strives to optimize and update its policy and regulatory framework for doctoral researchers, in which intermediate and final evaluation of doctoral researchers plays a key role. The ambition is to offer all stakeholders in the doctoral process maximum transparency of doctoral procedures in all</p>	
--	--	--	--

		stages and under all circumstances and to include comprehensive monitoring systems for consistent compliance with regulatory procedures.	
<p><b>7 Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use</b></p> <p>Purpose: This commitment will ensure that organisations raise awareness of the reform among all actors. It will ensure that organisations transparently communicate the criteria, tools and processes used for research assessment and train researchers and assessors in their use.</p>	<p>Without widespread awareness of the reform and training of those assessed and, crucially, assessors, progress will be slow – if not impossible.</p> <p><b>Organisations should be clear and transparent about assessment processes and the tools and criteria they use.</b> They should make guidance on their assessment approaches openly available and train those involved in the assessment process. They should allow those assessed to have access to the criteria, data and reviews or deliberation outcomes used in their assessment within the limits of confidentiality.</p> <p>Particular attention should be paid to raising awareness among researchers at all career stages.</p>	<p>For the internal evaluation of research(ers) and research applications within KU Leuven Internal Funds, an exhaustive overview of the criteria and indicators used, explaining the rationale behind their use and the source of these data, can be consulted by all academic staff.</p> <p>Evaluation procedures for external applicants are publicly available on the university's <a href="#">website</a>. These criteria and indicators will be revised because of the new framework for assessing research(er)s (cf. section 6.1).</p> <p>As referred to in section 3, training in the form of webinars and hands-on info sessions is being developed, aimed both at understanding what responsible use of metrics entails, and how to use metrics to support a personal CV correctly, particularly focused on early career researchers.</p>	<p>2024-</p> <p>2024-</p>
<p><b>8 Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition</b></p> <p>Purpose: This commitment will ensure organisations exchange and make use of information for mutual learning. It will help avoid fragmentation, contribute to the coherence of assessment practices between organisations, and enable researcher mobility. It also will allow</p>	<p>While respecting each other's autonomy, <b>organisations should share practices and experiences to facilitate mutual learning.</b> This exchange should include contributing to the development of guidance and common approaches in order to minimise contradictions or incompatibilities between the assessment practices used by different organisations. It should also include sharing of lessons learned to ensure continuous mutual improvements.</p>	<p>KU Leuven is an active member of diverse collaboration networks, such as LERU and Una Europa. Within LERU, for example, research assessment is tackled in the policy groups "Careers of Researchers &amp; HR", "Information and Open Access", "Research", and "Doctoral studies". Within Una Europa, a pilot MOOC was developed on Team Science. These platforms, complementary to CoARA, enable sharing experiences, learning from other institutions, and experimenting with new formats. We will evaluate how we can contribute to these networks in terms of responsible research assessment.</p>	

those further ahead to share approaches and lessons learned, to benefit those who have further to go on their reform journey.		KU Leuven is directly involved in CoARA through the WG ERIP, and indirectly – via the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR)- to the WG ACA. We monitor the activities of existing WG (and new ones) to determine where we can officially contribute to in the future.	
<p><b>9 Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments</b></p> <p>Purpose: This commitment will ensure organisations update one another on the progress made. It will foster careful self- reflection and monitoring of their own adherence to the Principles and progress towards meeting the Commitments.</p>	<p>Demonstrating progress made towards implementing the Commitments and adherence to the Principles is an important part of this initiative. <b>Organisations should commit to regularly update each other and their communities on their adherence and progress.</b> This process involves being open to scrutiny from their own communities, sharing successes as well as challenges, and communicating their experiences to facilitate collective progress.</p>	<p>KU Leuven will publish its CoARA Action Plan on the institutional web pages once approved, and on Zenodo.</p> <p>Annually a follow-up on progress via the Action Plan and a subsequent update of the plan is foreseen.</p>	<p>2024</p> <p>Annual monitoring</p>
<p><b>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</b></p> <p>Purpose: This commitment will ensure that assessment approach decisions are evidence informed. It will help organisations reflect on their own processes, gain understanding about whether assessment practices achieve the desired goals, and engage in evolutive assessment based on new</p>	<p>Growing evidence shows that current assessment processes that rely on publication- and journal-based metrics are prone to multiple biases. As approaches using more qualitative research assessment are piloted by several organisations (e.g. narrative and evidence-based CVs, new assessment frameworks and indicators), it is important to <b>evaluate and monitor their impact based on evidence and rigorous methods.</b></p> <p>Organisations should contribute to the evidence base on research assessment in order to make this possible. For example, it could be achieved by making data that can be used for research on research available, by participating in research on</p>	<p>KU Leuven’s Research Office seeks advice from <a href="#">ECOOM</a> (the bibliometrics group at KU Leuven) to check the validity of bibliometrics used in assessments.</p> <p>The Research Office intends to work more closely together with researchers in the field of science-on-science. The exact nature of this collaboration is still under discussion.</p> <p>Activities by other organizations, such as the Research-on-Research Institute projects, are being monitored, and relevant literature is kept track of mainly through subscription to mailing lists or journals.</p>	<p>2024-</p> <p>Continuous monitoring</p>

evidence as it becomes available. It will also help to ensure control and ownership of research assessment data by the research community.	research, or by funding research on research. Data sharing should be the minimum commitment and data should be shared through open infrastructure, while respecting personal data protection.		
--	---	--	--