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# **CoARA Action Plan 2024-2027**

## **Häme University of Applied Sciences**

Our commitments to high quality professional education and regional development of Kanta-Häme have always been supported by our strong focus on research, development, and innovation (RDI). The Thin Sheet Center in 1998, research-trained senior lecturers, and countless RDI projects over the years shaped our specific RDI profiles eventually leading to the establishment of our current research units in 2015. These research units, named HAMK Edu, HAMK Bio, HAMK Smart, and HAMK Tech, were in the centre of our RDI strategy: strong integration of education and applied research in collaboration with industry.

Today, the research units' pooled competence builds our multidisciplinary innovation ecosystems: Smart Systems and Biotechnology (SmartBio), Smart Sustainable Built Environment (SmartBuilt), and Smart Future Education and Capacity Building (SmartEdu). Overall, they carry out around 130 research projects annually together our active network of local, national, and international partners. The ecosystems' RDI activities are rooted in our Excellence Strategy program which challenges us to ask ourselves everyday: "Where can we be the best in the world?" On a broader scale, Finland's RDI goals, the changing European operational environment, and our own ambition to maintain future competitiveness constantly encourage us to develop new activities, such as initiating researcher/doctoral training, establishing HAMK researcher career paths, and extending our partner network.

As part of our ambition for excellence, we are committed to promoting responsible and high-quality research that meets the needs of society and industry. To manifest this ambition, we signed the The Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA) and joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) on October 26, 2023, committing us to adopt its principles for reforming our research assessment.

In this Action Plan, we outline the concrete measures to advance the ARRA commitments at HAMK and to ensure that our research assessment procedures are diverse, transparent, and fair. Additionally, this plan aims to raise awareness of the research assessment reform process at HAMK, provide the pathways for transparent communication and training on assessment criteria, and the means for exchanging best practices with other organisations. We are committed to allocating the necessary resources to implement the activities proposed in this Action Plan.

Overall, we see this Action Plan as a concrete step towards a more responsible and diverse research assessment process that support our strategic goals, lifts our profile as an employer, and enhances our role as an innovative and impactful research organisation.

## Commitments

1. Recognise 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 organisations in research assessment
5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to
6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes
7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use
8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition
9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments
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

## Action plan

Strengthening the Qualitative Criteria for the Researcher Assessment -project			
<i>This project aims to establish fair and sustainable criteria for researcher evaluation which aligns 1) with the commitments of ARRA and the vision of CoARA, and 2) HAMK's organisational goals outlined in our Strategy 2030.</i>			
Action	Step	Timeline	Responsible
<b>Development of Evaluation Criteria</b>	Relevant information gathered and processed for the development of evaluation criteria. The first draft of the evaluation criteria.	2025-2026	SuHAMK CoARAb project
<b>Alignment and Integration</b>	Evaluation criteria updated and built into an organizational process. Updated evaluation criteria and guidelines for implementation.	2025-2026	SuHAMK CoARAb project
<b>Transparency and Publication</b>	Publication of the evaluation criteria	2025-2026	SuHAMK CoARAb project
<b>Implementation and feedback</b>	First recruitment process applying the new criteria	2025-2026	SuHAMK CoARAb project

### Professional Doctorate Program

*The aim of professional doctorate program is a degree supervised and awarded in cooperation with our international partner university, for example, with our partners at RUN European University. The scope, content, costs and practices of the doctoral degree are determined by the requirements of the partner university. The research topic must be related to HAMK's key research ecosystems.*

Action	Step	Timeline	Responsible
<b>Professional Doctorate Program</b>	Development of UAS specific Doctorate Program with five other Finnish universities of applied sciences.	2025-2026	Vice President
	Review and develop the Researcher Career Path by following national and international recommendations and tools (for example, Finnish Career Assessment Matrix (FINN-CAM)).	2025-2027	Vice President

### Postdoctoral Program

*We are enhancing our research capabilities by launching our own postdoctoral program. This initiative allows recent PhD graduates to continue their training in applied research closely linked to business and society. The program focuses on multidisciplinary areas within our innovation ecosystems SmartBio, SmartBuilt, and SmartEdu, fostering innovation and practical business applications through strong industry collaboration.*

*In addition to the research-focused program, we are introducing a postdoctoral program specifically for teachers and educational professionals. This program aims to advance educational development by providing opportunities for postdoctoral researchers to engage in projects that enhance teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and educational technologies. A key component of this program is the development of work-based education, ensuring that training is closely aligned with industry needs and real-world applications. The primary goal is to improve the quality of education and support the professional growth of educators, preparing them to meet the evolving demands of the educational landscape and effectively integrate practical experiences into their teaching.*

Action	Step	Timeline	Responsible
<b>Post-doc program to support mission-based research and experts</b>	Develop and continue program	2026-2030	Research Director and Research Unit Directors
<b>Post-doc program to develop education</b>	Define the program content	2025-2026	Vice President and Deans
<b>Post-doc program to develop education</b>	Implement the program	2027-2028	Vice President and Deans

Training Programme			
<p><i>The training program to be designed and implemented for HAMK researchers allow participation at any stage during their career development. The training activities aim to develop strong competencies in research and transferable skills among HAMK researchers empowering them also with the ability to plan their future career and learning paths. The research skills needed in different kinds of work environments are apparent. Thus, one crosscutting principle in our training is that the researchers will become more aware of the variety of researcher careers and competences with the emphasis on the collaborative research possibilities with industry and research stakeholders. The variety of the training topics and modes is broad as HAMK researchers can choose training for themselves both from RUN-EU Researcher Career Development Training Programme under RUN-EU IRI and from HAMK100 staff training options. The training program will complement the degree education HAMK researchers have already earlier accomplished.</i></p>			
Action	Step	Timeline	Responsible
<b>Implementation of the Researcher's Research Skills Self-Assessment Tool</b>	The tool is used in performance appraisals for researchers. The tool is used in the career paths of principal research scientists.	2025	School of Professional Teacher Education, HAMK HR
<b>Encourage researchers to make their research skills visible</b>	Development of ePortfolio, organise workshops for researchers on the use of the ePortfolio.	2026-2027	HAMK Edu
<b>Training and Capacity Building</b>	Training program delivered	2026	RUN-IRI, HAMK100
<b>Onboarding materials for new researcher staff</b>	Development of onboarding materials for new researcher staff	2026-2027	HAMK HR