



Short Web Article

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## OPUS Consultation on Researcher Assessment

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## OPUS Consultation on Researcher Assessment

On **10 June 2025**, the **OPUS project** brought together **researchers, research managers, funders, and policy makers** to collaboratively shape the revision of the **OPUS Researcher Assessment Framework (RAF)**. The workshop aimed to engage in discussion and collect feedback from the participants on the first version of the RAF. The workshop was hosted by the Marie Curie Alumni Association and led by Gareth O'Neill from Technopolis Group. The workshop resulted in a lively and engaging interaction with the participants who acknowledged the value of the RAF and provided critical suggestions to revise the RAF.

### OPUS Researcher Assessment Framework (RAF)

The RAF consists of a **comprehensive framework of indicators** which are designed to provide research-performing and research-funding organisations with options to expand their **researcher assessments** systems beyond the traditional focus on publications and citations to include a much wider diversity of activities conducted by researchers. The RAF is further divided into a generic set of indicators covering all possible activities by researchers and a more specific set of indicators to incentivise and reward Open Science. The RAF is structured around four key domains of activities relevant for researchers:

- The **research** domain covers writing proposals, developing methods, managing data, developing software, writing publications, creating research materials, and peer reviewing research outputs.
- The **education** domain includes developing educational courses, creating educational resources, teaching students, supervising students, and developing personal and professional skills.
- The **leadership** domain focuses on leading personnel and projects, taking management roles within the organisation, and being recognised as an expert and for significant contributions.
- The **valorisation** domain lastly includes science communication to peer and general audiences, academic and intersectoral collaboration and engagement, and exploitation and entrepreneurship.

The RAF offers organisations an **array of indicators** from which to select and include in their researcher assessment systems. The indicators can be **deployed qualitatively or quantitatively** whereby the OPUS project encourages a combination of a qualitative and responsible quantitative approach to assessment. The RAF divides the indicators into **processes, outputs, and outcomes** as a researcher may find themselves in the middle of a research activity, or have realised an output, or have realised an outcome depending on the moment of their assessment. The **selection, refinement, and prioritisation** of indicators is left to the organisations which will tailor and implement the indicators according to their own strategic interests and needs and existing assessment processes.



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## Highlights from the OPUS Consultation Meeting

The participants raised a number of important points with regard generally to researcher assessment and specifically to the RAF in the consultation meeting:

- Participants stressed the importance of qualitative assessment and cited the lack of homogeneity across countries and disciplines as well as a lack of considering a global picture of skills development.
- There was a call for clearer definitions of assessment criteria, especially in academic hiring, where unwritten rules and lack of transparency around the assessment procedure continue to create inequity.
- We should acknowledge different types of personalities and contributions and embed these reforms into structural processes, such as habilitations, theses evaluations, and postdoc funding decisions
- The framework should be applicable to all researcher levels from early-career researchers (R1-R2) to senior researchers (R3-R4) and be applied flexibly depending on the researcher career stage and context,
- The term 'valorisation' is not well known to researchers and seems to include a mix of science communication, stakeholder engagement, and societal impact activities, although no better alternatives for the category were proposed.
- The term 'community service' (which refers to researcher contributions such as peer review and mentorship) are not grouped together but are spread across the four main categories of activities in the framework.
- Participants noted the distinction between supervising students (such as bachelor, master, and PhD students) which falls under the category of education versus supervising staff (such as PhD and other staff) which falls under the category of leadership in the framework.
- The term 'intersectoral engagement' is not so clear and seems to consist of different types of engagement activities (such as interactions, mobility, and collaboration) yet only applies across sectors while intrasectoral engagement within the academic sector is also important.
- The framework recognises actual effort by researchers and allows for the recognition of contributions by early-career researchers (such as proposal writing, project management, and peer reviews) which are often hidden.
- The implementation of the framework and researcher assessment procedure should not be a burden on researchers and should be kept simple and automated as much as possible to support researchers in their assessment.
- The framework is not directly linked to ResearchComp but could in its implementation be linked to the skills/competences recognised in ResearchComp such as in the skills development activities recognised in the framework.
- The framework should connect to the values and evolving priorities of the relevant organisations whereby the selection and refinement of indicators from the framework may reflect these values and priorities.
- Participants noted that the framework should directly link to the values and principles of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) as well as the evolving strategic interests and needs of the organisations.



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- The reform of research assessment may be impeded by national regulations which set predefined criteria for assessment and which must be followed and cannot be reformed by research-performing and research-funding organisations.
- The framework could be supported by a set of guidelines to explain how to implement the framework as well as examples of possible implementation for research-performing and research-funding organisations.
- The framework recognises a cross-cutting dimension for Open Science and could include a cross-cutting dimension to recognise teamwork and collaboration as well as equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- The framework is not focused on industry but the inclusion of indicators which are relevant for industry could help researchers in developing themselves professionally and collaborating with or even transitioning to industry.
- Candidates under assessment should be considered not only for the diversity of their research, education, leadership, and valorisation activities but also for their own specific skills/competences as well as their specific personalities

## Next Steps for OPUS

The first version of the RAF will be revised and updated according to the lessons learned by pilot organisations testing the RAF in the project as well as the feedback gathered during the consultation and will be published in the [OPUS Project Zenodo Community](#).



The OPUS project is implemented by an eighteen-organisations consortium led by The Oceanic Platform of the Canary Islands (PLOCAN).

All 18 organisations implementing the OPUS project are active at the European level spanning the whole spectrum of Open Science, including open access, inclusion, fairness, equity, and sharing.

#### Authors:

Gareth O'Neill, Mayya Sundukova, Emma Day

#### Contributors

- Sal Music (Head of Dissemination and Communication)
- Mak Loncar (Graphic Design)




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Open and Universal Science (OPUS) Project

[info@opusproject.eu](mailto:info@opusproject.eu)



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