



University of Potsdam



PRELIMINARY CoARA ACTION PLAN of the University Potsdam

July 9, 2025

PRELIMINARY COARA ACTION PLAN

The University of Potsdam aims to provide an attractive and stimulating working environment for researchers, emphasizing its commitment to open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment and promotion at all levels. As part of this effort, the university has successfully implemented the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (HRS4R) and set up comprehensive diversity and anti-discrimination strategies as central guiding documents. Furthermore, the university actively participates in innovative European initiatives, including the European Digital UniverCity (EDUC) and the Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN) to foster systematic improvements in supporting researchers.

In January 2024, the University of Potsdam joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), an initiative dedicated to reforming the evaluation of research performances. CoARA seeks to recognize the diversity of research methods and outcomes across disciplines, and to ensure that research assessment better reflects this diversity.

CoARA operates based on ten core commitments, which set a shared direction for reforming research assessment. These include recognizing the diversity of research contributions, use qualitative evaluation methods

alongside quantitative metrics, eliminating inappropriate uses of metrics, and avoiding the sole use of rankings. Additional commitments involve allocating resources to reform research assessment, revising and developing criteria, raising awareness, exchanging practices, communicating progress, and evaluating the implementation of the CoARA principles.

While a variety of indicators can be employed to assess research, there is a growing consensus that greater emphasis should be placed on indicators that reflect open accessibility of research outcomes and data, the creation of open educational resources, and contributions to science communication and public engagement. Social impact, teaching excellence, and supervision of students and early-career researchers are increasingly recognized as essential dimensions of research assessment (CoARA Survey 2024, see graph below).

In order to better understand and improve research assessment practices, the University of Potsdam has set up a working group, chaired by Professor Ralph Gräf, with members from different research areas and departments, reflecting the university's diversity. It was tasked with analyzing the current state of research evaluation and providing strategic recommendations for future improvements in form of a preliminary action plan.

RESEARCH ASSESSMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF POTSDAM

Research evaluations occur at all levels at the University of Potsdam, encompassing PhD and postdoc assessments, tenure-track evaluations, and faculty appointments (“Berufungen”). Research assessment is influenced significantly by the diverse evaluation cultures of the various disciplines of the University of Potsdam. While some faculties have implemented a certain degree of standardization and structured guidelines for evaluating research performance, others rely on more flexible, discipline-specific traditions. This variation reflects the breadth of academic fields represented at the university but also highlights the need for more cohesive and transparent practices in certain areas.

For example, the application of a more standardized research assessment approach has been driven by the implementation of federally funded tenure-track professorships (federal program for the promotion of early-career re-

searchers – WISNA). Those tenure-track guidelines provide a transparent framework for the evaluation process and are applied across all research areas. Experiences from the tenure-track professorships program will be a cornerstone for the future development of more broadly applicable and transparent guidelines for the evaluation of research careers.

Furthermore, the University of Potsdam has integrated Open Science as a core element of its commitment to good scientific practice and excellence. This fundamental goal is outlined in several policy documents. A key objective of the university's Open Science guidelines is the coherent visibility, targeted development, and networking of all relevant research areas, as well as the unlocking of synergies. In some research areas, Open Science has already become an established practice. In other areas, development is still in its early stages.

PLANNED ACTIONS

The University of Potsdam has identified six key areas for action based on the current state of research assessment. The following measures are preliminary:

1. **Draft research assessment guidelines¹ for the diverse research areas**
Develop a detailed action plan, based on the results of the working group and drawing on the University's research areas.
2. **Develop guidelines for application materials and procedures**
Ensure that application documents do not only rely on quantitative evaluation methods and metrics and account for the specific traditions, methods, and priorities of different disciplines to promote fair and relevant evaluations. Standardization should not impose unnecessary burdens on applicants.

¹ The guidelines in this document should be seen as recommendations.

3. **Establish comprehensible and coherent evaluation guidelines**
Develop discipline-specific assessment guidelines for the evaluation of and doctoral dissertations to ensure fair assessment procedures and to increase the transparency, effectiveness and efficiency of evaluations.
4. **Recognize and value Open Science practices**
Foster transparency, reproducibility, accessibility, and collaboration in research as outline in existing guidelines such as institutional Open Science policies.
5. **Reevaluate central tenure track criteria for fairness and equal opportunities**
Review and update tenure criteria guidelines to reflect diverse research outputs, interdisciplinary work, and impact while increasing transparency for all stakeholders involved.
6. **Acknowledge and highlight excellence in supervision**
Develop mechanisms to recognize and honor effective and dedicated supervision, making it a visible and valued aspect of academic performance assessment.

GRAPH 1: INDICATORS FOR ASSESSING ACADEMIC CAREERS



Results of the survey conducted by the CoARA Working Group “Reforming Academic Career Assessment” presented at an online workshop on 25 June 2024 (presentation and recordings [accessed February 18, 2025]).

