

1. Context

Ghent University is actively promoting an evaluation culture that prioritises the quality and impact of research, values diversity among researchers as well as in research, and advocates for good and responsible research practices. As part of its dedication to supporting and implementing responsible research evaluation principles, Ghent University formally endorsed the [European Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#) in 2022. In its effort to fulfill the commitments outlined in this Agreement, Ghent University has developed an action plan to guide its forthcoming activities in the domain of research assessment. The actions (chapter 2) are founded on a GAP analysis (chapter 3) and target the university's most urgent issues related to responsible research assessment. Ghent University's Executive Board approved the Action Plan on June 9th, 2023.

2. Overview of actions

	Action	Deadline
1	The call/evaluation documents are tailored, for each call/evaluation, to (a) the specific content and objectives of the call/evaluation, (b) Ghent University's vision on the responsible use of quantitative indicators, and (c) Ghent University's vision on research evaluation. The aim is to enhance transparency and alleviate the workload for both evaluated researchers and evaluators.	31/12/2027
2	Guidelines for evaluators are customised for each call/evaluation, taking into account (a) the specific content and objectives of the call/evaluation, (b) Ghent University's vision on the responsible use of quantitative indicators and (c) Ghent University's vision on research evaluation.	31/12/2027
3	The guide for the use of quantitative indicators from 2017 undergoes an update and is transformed into a guideline for the responsible use of quantitative indicators, which is then broadly communicated.	31/12/2023
4	In collaboration with researchers, a future evaluation framework for the university's <i>Interdisciplinary research consortia aimed at realising societal impact</i> is developed. Emphasis is placed on creating criteria for evaluating societal impact and interdisciplinarity.	31/12/2024
5	Existing best practices in evaluating research groups, departments and faculties are compiled and made available to entities interested in (voluntarily) assessing their research activities.	31/12/2027
6	Ghent University's communication channels (especially the website) are used to transparently inform the research community about (a) Ghent University's research evaluation policy and (b) its further implementation.	31/12/2027
7	The needs for training, information provision, etc. regarding research evaluation (in the context of Ghent University) are identified and analysed.	31/12/2026
8	If appropriate, a pilot training or information session is organised based on the outcomes of action 7.	31/12/2027
9	Ghent University is an active member of the <i>Coalition for the Advancement of Research Assessment</i> (CoARA). Outside CoARA, no initiatives for knowledge building and sharing are initiated.	31/12/2027
10	Progress reports detailing the implementation of Ghent University's vision on research assessment and the principles outlined in the <i>Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment</i> are submitted to the university's Research Council and the Board of Governors.	31/06/2027
11	Ghent University's data on the evaluation of research(ers) are made accessible (as far as possible) to (external) researchers for research purposes. Ghent University refrains from initiating research-on-research activities, except in cases of individual initiatives by Ghent University researchers or research groups.	31/12/2027

3. Annex. GAP analysis

	Commitment in the <i>Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment</i>	State of play at Ghent University in March 2023	Objectives and actions 2023-2027
1	Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Embedded in the university's research evaluation policy https://www.ugent.be/en/ghentuniv/mission/research-policy/overview.htm#Responsibleassessmentandevaluation - Implemented in the Career model and evaluation policy for professors (2018) and the recruitment policy for professors (2022-2023) https://www.ugent.be/en/work/mobility-career/career-aspects/professorial-staff - Implemented in the evaluation procedures organised by the Research Council https://www.ugent.be/en/research/funding/bof - Integrated in the career frameworks for scientific staff, business developers, co-ordinators of the <i>Interdisciplinary research consortia aimed at realising societal impact</i>, etc. - Additional activities and policies to support researchers in their different roles (e.g., leadership training), to support responsible research culture (e.g., policy on scholarly publishing, authorship,...) 	Ghent University is already substantially meeting this commitment. No additional actions will be developed in this regard in the period 2023-2027.
2	Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Embedded in the university's research evaluation policy <i>Peer review:</i> - Implemented in the Career model and evaluation policy for professors (2018) and the recruitment policy for professors (2022-2023), evaluation procedures organised by the Research Council, PhD examinations, etc. <i>Responsible use of quantitative indicators</i> - Existing <i>Guidelines for the use of quantitative indicators in the evaluation of research</i> (2017) – see commitment 3 	<p>Objective: Make efficient use of peer review, including reducing the workload for peer reviewers and evaluators</p> <p>(action 1a) Align candidate submission forms with specific calls/evaluations, among other things, to avoid requesting and evaluating unnecessary information Deadline 31/12/2027</p> <p>(action 2a) Taylor guidelines for evaluators to specific calls/evaluations Deadline 31/12/2027</p> <p>Objective: Make responsible use of quantitative indicators – see commitment 3</p>
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 (as proxies for quality and impact) 'Inappropriate uses' include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relying exclusively on author-based metrics (e.g. counting papers, patents, citations, grants, etc.) to assess quality and/or impact; • assessing outputs based on metrics relating to publication venue, format or language; • relying on any other metrics that do not properly capture quality and/or impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Embedded in the university's research evaluation policy - Existing <i>Guidelines for the use of quantitative indicators in the evaluation of research</i> (2017) - Signatory of San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) (2020) - Implemented in recruitment procedures, evaluations organised by the Research Council, etc. 	<p>Objective: Make responsible use of quantitative indicators</p> <p>(action 3) Update the 2017 <i>Guidelines for the use of quantitative indicators</i> Deadline 31/12/2023</p> <p>Objective: Implement the updated <i>Guidelines</i></p> <p>(action 1b) Integrate the principles of responsible use of quantitative indicators into the job and grant application forms Deadline 31/12/2027</p> <p>(action 2b) Integrate the principles of responsible use of quantitative indicators into the guidelines for evaluators Deadline 31/12/2027</p>
4	Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ghent University already adopts a critical stance towards rankings - Rankings are not used in research(er) assessment 	Ghent University is already substantially meeting this commitment. No additional actions will be developed in this regard in the period 2023-2027.
5	Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Researchers are involved in the reform process, in particular as members of the HR committees for professors, as evaluators in selection panels, as members of the Research Council, etc. - Expertise is already available inside the university's administrative units, in particular the Department of Personnel and Organisation, the Research Department and the Department of Educational Policy 	Ghent University is already substantially meeting this commitment. No additional actions will be developed in this regard in the period 2023-2027.
6	Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes CRITERIA FOR UNITS AND INSTITUTIONS With the direct involvement of research organisations and researchers at all career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Official representatives of researchers are actively involved in the development and implementation of evaluation policies and practices (in accordance with the university's participatory model) 	Objective: Develop criteria for the evaluation of societal impact and interdisciplinarity (within the context of the assessment of the <i>Interdisciplinary research consortia aimed at realising societal impact</i> IDC)

	<p>stages, review and develop criteria for assessing research units and research performing organisations, while promoting interoperability</p> <p>CRITERIA FOR PROJECTS AND RESEARCHERS</p> <p>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</p>	<p>- Existing evaluations have been developed with, by and for researchers</p>	<p>(action 4) Develop an evaluation framework for the assessment of the IDC, in consultation with researchers and using the SCOPE framework Deadline 31/12/2024</p> <p>Objective: Facilitate the evaluation of research groups, departments, and faculties</p> <p>(action 5) Compile and make available existing best practices to support entities that (voluntarily) wish to evaluate their research initiatives</p>
7	<p>Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use</p>	<p>- Existing communication channels are already utilised for broad communication and awareness-raising: website, staff newsletter, etc.</p> <p>- Several guidelines and frameworks already exist: inspirational frameworks within the career model for professors, guidelines for applicants in BOF applications, guidelines for evaluators in BOF applications, etc.</p>	<p>Objective: Make the university's vision on research evaluation widely known</p> <p>(action 6a) Further develop the webpages related to research evaluation https://www.ugent.be/en/research/research-strategy/evaluation Deadline 31/12/2027</p> <p>Objective: Make the university's vision on research evaluation known to applicants/candidates/researchers undergoing evaluation</p> <p>(action 1c) Align the evaluation forms with the vision on research evaluation Deadline 31/12/2027</p> <p>Objective: Make the university's vision on research evaluation known to evaluators</p> <p>(action 2c) Align the guidelines for evaluators with the vision on research evaluation Deadline 31/12/2027</p> <p>Objective: Increase awareness regarding the responsible use of quantitative indicators</p> <p>(action 3) Update, specify, and widely disseminate the 2017 <i>Guidelines for the use of quantitative indicators in the evaluation of research</i> Deadline 31/12/2023</p> <p>Objective: Organise training regarding the evaluation of research</p> <p>(action 7) Identify and analyse the needs in terms of training, information sessions, etc. (targeted at diverse audiences, with specific attention to Early Career Researchers and including evaluators) Deadline 31/12/2026</p> <p>(action 8, subject to the outcome of action 7) Organise a pilot training or informational session Deadline 31/12/2027</p>
8	<p>Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition</p>	<p>- Knowledge exchange occurs, but often in an ad hoc manner and within the context of temporary projects</p>	<p>Objective: Share knowledge and experiences in an organised manner</p> <p>(action 9) Take an active role in the <i>Coalition for the Advancement of Research Assessment</i>. (no additional commitments outside the Coalition are taken) Deadline 31/12/2027</p>
9	<p>Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments</p>		<p>Objective: Communicate about the implementation of the <i>Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment</i></p> <p>(action 10) Report to the Research Council and the Board of Governors (evaluation of the action plan) Deadline 30/6/2027</p> <p>(action 6b) Inform the broader research community (inside and outside Ghent University) through the webpage https://www.ugent.be/en/research/research-strategy/evaluation Deadline 31/12/2027</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A lot of data is available, through the university's repositories and research information systems - In the development of the evaluation policy and practices, international literature, best practices, etc., are already taken into account 	<p>Objective: Contribute to research on research</p> <p>(action 9) Take an active role in the <i>Coalition for the Advancement of Research Assessment</i>.</p> <p>(action 11) Make Ghent University's data available to (external) researchers where possible (no coordinated actions are taken to initiate or encourage research on research)</p>
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