

## CoARA Action Plan 2023

### 1. THE UNIVERSITY OF ANDORRA'S ENDORSEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT AND ADHESION TO CoARA

The International Doctoral School of the University of Andorra conducted a comprehensive review of the Principles and Commitments outlined in the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment. The revision process evinced that the guiding principles of the University of Andorra, along with the results and activities evaluated by the Research Career, the criteria for assessing research groups' outcomes and the assessment process within the Doctoral Programme were in alignment with the principles and core commitments of the Agreement and the CoARA. In light of the foregoing, the International Doctoral School opted to submit a proposal to the Academic Board, the University's highest governing body- requesting the approval for the endorsement of the Agreement and the affiliation with the Coalition for Advancing Research Agreement (CoARA) in May. The Academic Board resolved to sign the Agreement and formally seek membership on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2023.

As a result, the University of Andorra signed the Agreement and requested to join the Coalition for Advancing Research Agreement (CoARA) last May. On the 29<sup>th</sup> May the CoARA secretariat announced that the University of Andorra's signature of the Agreement and its membership to CoARA had been accepted and validated by the CoARA Steering Board. Therefore, the University of Andorra is currently listed among the CoARA member organisations.

Promptly after the CoARA secretariat's announcement, the university community was duly informed<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, several journal articles<sup>2</sup> were published at the national level to inform the Andorran society that the University of Andorra had signed the Agreement and become a member organisation of CoARA.

## **2. THE UNIVERSITY OF ANDORRA'S PRESENT STATUS CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLES OUTLINED IN THE AGREEMENT**

### **1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research**

The University of Andorra recognises, acknowledges, respects and honours all scientific disciplines, research types, stages and roles within the research career, as well as embraces multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary approaches along with inter-sectorial research methodologies, fostering a diversity of outputs. Specifically, the Research Career of the University of Andorra evaluates:

- Mobility and stays abroad.
- PhD supervision.
- Attendance and participation in congresses and conferences with or without communication proposal.
- Any type of publication without relying on metrics like the Journal Impact Factor (JIF), Article Influence Score (AIS) and h-index as proxies for quality and impact.
- Varied training courses and seminars, and not only those related to teaching or the research field.
- Any type of project development.
- Participation in:
  - Bachelors' degree final project assessment committees,

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<sup>1</sup> *L'UdA s'adhereix a l'Acord per a la reforma de l'avaluació de la recerca.* (May 29, 2023). Butlletí UdA. <https://butlleti.uda.ad/article/luda-sadhereix-a-lacord-per-a-la-reforma-de-lavaluacio-de-la-recerca/>

<sup>2</sup> Redacció. (May 22, 2023). *L'UdA s'adhereix a un acord per reformar l'avaluació de la recerca.* Diari d'Andorra. [https://www.diariandorra.ad/noticies/nacional/2023/05/22/l\\_uda\\_adherex\\_acord\\_per\\_reformar\\_avaluacio\\_recerca\\_221472\\_1125.html](https://www.diariandorra.ad/noticies/nacional/2023/05/22/l_uda_adherex_acord_per_reformar_avaluacio_recerca_221472_1125.html)

Redacció. (May 22, 2023). *L'UdA s'adhereix a l'Acord per a la reforma de l'avaluació de la recerca.* Bon Dia. <https://www.bondia.ad/societat/luda-sadhereix-lacord-la-reforma-de-lavaluacio-de-la-recerca>

- Masters' degree final project assessment committees,
- Doctoral programme assessment committees and external assessment (Research Project, Doctoral Thesis Project Report, and Doctoral Thesis).
- Internship assessment committees,
- Internal commissions,
- Scientific committees and editorial boards.

2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators

The Doctoral Programme of the University of Andorra is based on seven milestones throughout the course of its development:

1. Admission to the Doctoral Programme by an Admission Panel
2. Research Project presentation before a panel of expert professors
3. Final admission and supervision assignment
4. Approval of publications and external assessment of the Doctoral Thesis Progress Report. The external assessment is carried out by means of a peer review process.
5. Progress Report presentation before a panel of expert professors
6. Doctoral Thesis external assessment. It is carried out by means of an anonymous peer review process
7. Doctoral Thesis final evaluation before a panel of expert professors

Concerning the specific details of this process, for the fourth milestone (Doctoral Thesis Progress Report) and the sixth milestone (Doctoral Thesis), the experts responsible for conducting the external assessment through a peer review process are selected by the Research and Doctoral Commission. In the case of the external assessment of the Doctoral Thesis Progress Report, experts evaluate:

- Presence of specific objectives in, and relevance of, the subject under study.
- Presence of a methodological strategy coherent with the proposed objectives.
- Interest and quality of expected and attained results.
- Relevance and topicality of the bibliography provided.
- Structure, clarity, wording, and phrasing.
- Quality of publications presented by the PhD candidate.
- Expert's recommendations and other aspects to improve.

- Minor changes required.
- Major changes required.
- Final assessment of the Doctoral Thesis Progress Report:
  - It is feasible as is and can be presented before a panel of expert professors.
  - It is feasible provided minor changes are implemented, for which the PhD candidate will have a 15-day period.
  - It is not feasible, as it requires major changes and a new revision.

In relation to the external assessment of the Doctoral Thesis, experts evaluate:

- Presence of specific objectives in, and relevance of, the subject under study.
- Presence of a methodological strategy coherent with the proposed objectives.
- Interest and quality of attained results.
- Relevance and topicality of the bibliography provided.
- Structure, clarity, wording, and phrasing.
- Quality of publications presented by the PhD candidate.
- Expert's recommendations and other aspects to improve.
- Final assessment of the Doctoral Thesis in percentage terms:
  - 0-25%: well below the average for thesis in the same field.
  - 50 %: the average for thesis in the same field.
  - 75-100 %: well above the average for thesis in the same field.
- Feasibility of presenting the Doctoral Thesis before a panel of expert professors.
  - It is feasible as is and can be presented before a panel of expert professors.
  - It is feasible provided minor changes are implemented, for which the PhD candidate will have a 15-day period.
  - It is feasible provided major changes are implemented.
  - It is not feasible as is.

In both the external assessment of the Doctoral Thesis Progress Report and the external assessment of the Doctoral Thesis, obtaining the unanimous agreement of both experts is mandatory for presenting the academic work before a panel. Consequently, the experts' assessment can be regarded as a quantitative evaluation.

Regarding the panels responsible for assessing the presentation of the Doctoral Thesis Progress Report, aside from documenting the panel's proceedings, its members write a report evaluating the following aspects:

- Presence of specific objectives in, and relevance of, the subject under study.
- Presence of a methodological strategy coherent with the proposed objectives.
- Interest and quality of expected and attained results.
- Relevance and topicality of the bibliography provided.
- Quality of publications presented by the PhD candidate.
- Assessment of the PhD candidate's research capacity:
  - Research approach.
  - Knowledge (argumentative ability, critical thinking, creativity, ethics).
- Assessment of the PhD candidate's communication ability:
  - Oral communication ability.
  - Written communication ability.
- Additional comments from the panel.
- Final assessment of the Doctoral Thesis Progress Report:
  - Not passed.
  - Pass.
  - Passed unanimously.

For this panel, the report entails conducting a qualitative assessment, with the final section representing the quantitative evaluation of the academic work. This quantitative assessment is then documented in the doctoral candidate's file.

In relation to the panels tasked with assessing the presentation of the Doctoral Thesis, in addition to documenting the panel's proceedings, its members write a report evaluating the following aspects:

- Observations on the qualification of the doctoral thesis.
- Recommendations from the panel.
- Proposals from the panel on the continuation of the research work.
- Final assessment of the Doctoral Thesis (by majority or unanimity):
  - Fail.
  - Pass.
  - Merit.
  - Distinction.

- Distinction cum laude. Only grades of Distinction achieved through unanimous agreement from the panel qualify for the "distinction cum laude." The highest distinction, reserved for candidates demonstrating exceptional qualities in their works and defense, can only be conferred through a secret and unanimous vote by the members of the panel.

For this panel, the report entails conducting a qualitative assessment, with the final section representing the quantitative evaluation of the academic work. This quantitative assessment is then documented in the doctoral candidate's file.

Furthermore, the Research Career of the University of Andorra acknowledges and evaluates involvement in peer review evaluation processes, both internally and externally, as well as participation in scientific committees and editorial boards.

### 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

The University of Andorra refrains has always refrained from employing metrics to assess research outcomes, thereby accommodating a wide range of scholarly publications.

### 4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment

The University of Andorra has always refrained from employing rankings to assess research outcomes, which favourably contributes to the institution's autonomy to shape assessment practices.

### 5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to

Considering the information stated before, the University of Andorra believes that there is no need to allocate resources to reform research assessment.

### 6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes

Assessment criteria and tools used to assess research groups' results are revised and agreed upon in the Research and Doctoral Commission, which is formed by research groups and researchers at all career stages, among other members and representatives:

- the rector,
- the colleges' directors,
- the head of the International Doctoral School,
- the coordinator of the Doctoral Programme,
- the representative of the collective of research group's members,
- the representative of the teaching staff,
- the representative of the collective of doctoral candidates.

7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use

The University of Andorra does not consider necessary to notify researchers of a research assessment reform, as the institution does not currently intend to modify its assessment process. In addition, researchers are transparently informed of the criteria, tools, and processes used for assessing their results. Furthermore, the institution offers advice and trains researchers in the implementation of the evaluation process.

8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition

Now that the Agreement has been signed, the University plans to perform this action periodically.

9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments

Now that the Agreement has been signed, the University plans to perform this action periodically.

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

The implementation of a data plan management within the Doctoral Programme may facilitate the adoption of this action.

### **3. ACTION PLAN AND ROADMAP**

The University of Andorra intends to carry out the following actions:



		2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Institutional commitment	CoARA	Gathering information on the University's research assessment process				
		Comparing the University's research assessment practices with the principles and commitments of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment.				
		Signing the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment				
		Joining the CoARA				
		Informing the university community of the signature of the Agreement and the adherence to the CoARA.				
		Reviewing CoARA's principles and commitments.	Reviewing CoARA's principles and commitments.	Reviewing CoARA's principles and commitments.	Reviewing CoARA's principles and commitments.	Reviewing CoARA's principles and commitments.
		Revisiting working groups' proposals to explore the possibility	Reviewing working groups' proposals to explore the possibility	Reviewing working groups' proposals to explore the possibility	Reviewing working groups' proposals to explore the possibility	Reviewing working groups' proposals to explore the possibility

		of joining to any of them.	of joining to any of them.	of joining to any of them.	of joining to any of them.	of joining to any of them.
		Participating in the CoARA General Assembly and any additional meetings convened by the Coalition.	Participating in the CoARA General Assembly and any additional meetings convened by the Coalition.	Participating in the CoARA General Assembly and any additional meetings convened by the Coalition.	Participating in the CoARA General Assembly and any additional meetings convened by the Coalition.	Participating in the CoARA General Assembly and any additional meetings convened by the Coalition.
	DORA		Signing the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA).			
			Informing the university community of the signature of the Agreement and the endorsement to DORA.			
			Reviewing DORA's recommendations and initiatives to assess the feasibility of implementing them at the University.	Reviewing DORA's recommendations and initiatives to assess the feasibility of implementing them at the University.	Reviewing DORA's recommendations and initiatives to assess the feasibility of implementing them at the University.	Reviewing DORA's recommendations and initiatives to assess the feasibility of implementing them at the University.
Research and Doctoral Programme	Funding	Allocating funding for Open access publishing.	Allocating funding for Open access publishing.	Allocating funding for Open access publishing.	Allocating funding for Open access publishing.	Allocating funding for Open access publishing.
	Research Career		Follow-up and monitoring of the actions carried out, such as the biennial		Follow-up and monitoring of the actions carried out, such as the biennial	

			research assessment by means of the Research Career.		research assessment by means of the Research Career.	
	Data management plan		Envisaging the implementation of a data management plan for the Doctoral Programme.	Incorporating a data management plan for the Doctoral Programme, if necessary.		
	Research principles and recommendations for publication			Compiling research assessment principles (i.e. prioritising open-access publications).	Writing a document with recommendations for researchers giving advice on what types of publications to prioritize.	