

# Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy

## CoARA Action Plan

*TMA, as a student-oriented higher education institution, primarily seeks to teach and develop national and international healthcare professionals in an innovative manner by using **evidence-based knowledge**, whilst practically benefiting the community in Georgia **through research-based outreach activities**.*

### Introduction

**Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy (TMA)** - the university focused on quality and innovation in the field of healthcare education, with growing reputation in research and competence to initiate and realize projects and activities targeted on challenges of healthcare practice and education.

TMA recognizes the importance of research assessment and acknowledges that research results are diverse. They can include: scientific articles, data, software, different variants of the copyright as well as intellectual resources (i.e., young researchers trained accordingly with the international standards). The recommendations of San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) as well as the principles of Leiden Manifesto have been used as the background for the development of the research assessment principles and methodologies at Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy (hereinafter – TMA). Research assessment at TMA considers three-level evaluation:

1. Institutional level – the efficacy of the research facilitation mechanisms and programmes as well as the institutional research activities are evaluated and analyzed (number of projects submitted for participation in external funding schemes / number of funded projects in external funding schemes, number of submitted joint (prepared by several researchers of TMA) projects for participation in external funding schemes, number of registered patents and/or other forms of copyright).
2. Programme level – the results of the internal funding schemes are analyzed (number of applications / number of funded projects / number of participant young scientists and students).
3. Individual level – researchers scientific activity is evaluated through determination of the number of published scientific articles.

TMA signed the Agreement and joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment on February 28, 2023. Same year the institution joins working group “Responsible metrics and indicators”.

### Setting the stage for change

TMA holds a set of core principles essential for nurturing an environment conducive to responsible research assessment. First and foremost, **transparency** is paramount. TMA is unwavering in its commitment to maintaining transparency throughout all research assessment processes. The evaluation criteria and methodologies are articulated in a clear and open style, ensuring that the assessment process remains accountable and accessible to all involved parties. **Equity and inclusivity** are the important aspects of reform efforts too. Recognizing the diverse contributions of researchers, TMA aims to cultivate a fair and inclusive assessment environment that values forms of research outputs, irrespective of origin or background. Moreover, TMA embraces a culture of **continuous improvement**; changes are to be introduced incrementally, with a strong emphasis on providing

comprehensive education and training to all participants. This approach ensures that individuals understand the rationale behind the changes and are equipped with the necessary skills to implement them efficiently, fostering a culture of collective responsibility and ownership. Regular assessment of the progress, identification of challenges, making of informed decisions regarding the implementation of reforms are to be implemented and to ensure that process remains dynamic and responsive to evolving needs. Engagement of all participants (departments and faculty members) is fundamental to success of reform efforts, with opportunities provided for input and feedback at every stage. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of ownership and collaboration among community of TMA, ensuring that reform initiatives are informed by diverse perspectives and experiences. Good practices are shared internally through a variety of channels, including training sessions, seminars, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Externally, TMA engages in knowledge exchange with other institutions through conferences, webinars, and collaborative initiatives, contributing to the broader advancement of responsible research assessment practices.

However, key challenges in reforming research assessment, including resistance to change, and lack of awareness or understanding of responsible assessment practices are obvious. Employing targeted education and training initiatives, clear communication of objectives, and fostering a supportive research culture. Moreover, the importance of ongoing evaluation and adjustment of TMA efforts, with alternative strategies such as pilots and mentorship opportunities being considered to overcome challenges and drive progress. Through these concerted efforts, TMA endeavors to establish themselves as an institution of responsible research assessment, fostering a culture of excellence, equity, and inclusivity in the pursuit of knowledge and innovation.

#### CoARA commitments and how TMA fulfills them

Reflection point	Description	Milestone
Facilitating recognition of diverse contributions and career paths in research	TMA recognizes the multifaceted nature of research contributions and career trajectories, tailored to the diverse needs and nature of research. Organization plans to foster greater recognition of diverse contributions to research by implementing inclusive evaluation practices that appreciate various forms of scholarly outputs beyond traditional metrics. We aim to enable greater diversity in career paths and profiles by offering flexible career development opportunities, mentorship programs, and support for interdisciplinary collaboration, ensuring that researchers from diverse backgrounds and career stages have equal opportunities for advancement.	<p><b>Milestone 1</b> - Establish and implement mentorship programs and career development initiatives tailored to the needs of researchers at different career stages, fostering greater diversity in career paths and profiles.</p> <p><i>Aligns with CoARA commitment to recognize the diversity of contributions to research.</i></p> <p><i>Supports CoARA's goal of fostering inclusive evaluation practices beyond traditional metrics.</i></p> <p><i>Contributes to CoARA's aim of enabling greater diversity in career paths and profiles through mentorship and support for interdisciplinary collaboration</i></p>
Embracing qualitative evaluation and responsible use of metrics	TMA is committed to basing research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation, with peer review at its core. We plan to actively engage in and learn from research on research work,	<b>Milestone 1</b> - Organize workshops and seminars on responsible research assessment, inviting experts to share insights on qualitative evaluation and responsible metrics use.

	<p>leveraging insights from interdisciplinary studies to inform our assessment practices. Additionally, we will accommodate qualitative evaluation mechanisms and ensure that the use of metrics aligns with our organization's values by emphasizing the responsible and contextualized use of quantitative indicators, prioritizing quality over quantity in research assessment.</p>	<p><b>Milestone 2</b> - Develop guidelines for peer review processes that emphasize the importance of qualitative evaluation and provide training to peer reviewers on best practices.</p> <p><i>Correspond to CoARA's commitment to base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation.</i></p> <p><i>Demonstrate adherence to CoARA's principle of emphasizing responsible and contextualized use of quantitative indicators.</i></p>
<p>Mitigating reliance on journal- and publication-based metrics</p>	<p>In line with our commitment to responsible research assessment TMA aims to mitigate reliance on inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index. We plan to educate all parties and participants on the limitations of these metrics, promote alternative indicators that capture the quality and impact of research more accurately, and encourage a culture shift towards valuing diverse forms of scholarly output beyond journal publications.</p>	<p><b>Milestone 1</b> - Conduct awareness campaigns to educate stakeholders about the limitations of journal based metrics like JIF and h-index, emphasizing the importance of considering diverse research outputs.</p> <p><i>Reflects CoARA's goal of avoiding inappropriate uses of journal based metrics like JIF and h-index.</i></p> <p><i>Contributes to CoARA's effort to educate participants about the limitations of these metrics and promote alternative indicators.</i></p>
<p>Avoiding the use of organizational rankings</p>	<p>TMA is dedicated to avoiding the use of rankings of research organizations in research assessment. We will prioritize holistic evaluation criteria that consider the unique strengths and contributions of individual researchers and research projects, rather than relying on institutional rankings which may oversimplify the complex landscape of research excellence.</p>	<p><b>Milestone 1</b> - Collaborate with other institutions to develop alternative assessment frameworks that prioritize quality and impact over organizational prestige.</p> <p><i>Supports CoARA's commitment to avoid the use of rankings of research organizations in assessment.</i></p> <p><i>Aligns with CoARA's principle of prioritizing holistic evaluation criteria over institutional rankings.</i></p>
<p>Reviewing and developing assessment criteria, tools and processes</p>	<p>TMA aims to review and develop research assessment criteria, tools, and processes to align with commitment to responsible research assessment. This may involve piloting or implementing alternative assessment formats such as narrative CVs or competency based evaluations to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of researchers' contributions and capabilities.</p>	<p><b>Milestone 1</b> - Pilot alternative assessment formats such as narrative CVs and competency based evaluations to evaluate researchers' contributions more comprehensively.</p> <p><i>Aligns with CoARA's commitment to review and develop assessment criteria and processes.</i></p> <p><i>Demonstrates TMA's effort to align assessment practices with CoARA's principles of responsible research assessment.</i></p>

<p>Raising awareness and providing training</p>	<p>To facilitate transparent communication and understanding of research assessment reform, TMA will provide comprehensive training, guidance, and support to assessment panels, committees, and faculty members. We aim to raise awareness of reform efforts and ensure that all participants are equipped with the knowledge and resources needed to implement assessment criteria and processes effectively.</p>	<p><b>Milestone 1</b> - Disseminate the data and materials of research assessment reform among faculty, researchers, and administrative staff.</p> <p><b>Milestone 2</b> - Provide training sessions and workshops for assessment panels, committees, and faculty members to ensure they understand and adhere to responsible assessment practices.</p> <p><i>Supports</i> CoARA's goal of raising awareness of research assessment reform efforts.</p> <p><i>Contributes</i> to CoARA's aim of providing training and support to stakeholders involved in assessment processes.</p>
<p>Promoting exchange of practices and experiences</p>	<p>TMA is committed to fostering mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition by facilitating the exchange of practices and experiences in national and international contexts. We aim to organize workshops, conferences, and collaborative initiatives to share insights, challenges, and best practices in research assessment, promoting continuous improvement and innovation in the field.</p>	<p><b>Milestone 1</b> - Organize symposiums and conferences to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration among researchers and institutions interested in reforming research assessment.</p> <p><b>Milestone 2</b> - Establish partnerships with national and international organizations to share best practices and learn from experiences in different research ecosystems.</p> <p><i>Corresponds</i> to CoARA's commitment to foster mutual learning and exchange of practices.</p> <p><i>Demonstrates</i> TMA's effort to contribute to the broader advancement of responsible research assessment practices advocated by CoARA.</p>
<p>Transparent communication and evaluation</p>	<p>TMA ensures transparent communication of our research evaluation processes both within and outside the organization. We will regularly communicate progress made on adherence to principles and implementation of commitments, providing participants with updates on assessment criteria, tools, and processes. Additionally, we will evaluate our practices based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, making data openly available for evidence gathering</p>	<p><b>Milestone 1</b> - Publish regular (annual) reports on the progress of research assessment reform efforts, including updates on changes to assessment criteria, tools, and processes.</p> <p><b>Milestone 2</b> - Solicit feedback from participants through surveys and focus groups to evaluate the effectiveness of reform initiatives and identify areas for improvement.</p>

	and research to inform future improvements.	<p><b>Reflects</b> CoARA's principle of transparent communication of research evaluation processes.</p> <p><b>Demonstrates</b> TMA's commitment to evaluate assessment practices based on solid evidence and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research.</p>
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**Summary remarks**

Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy upholds a clear commitment to responsible research assessment aligned with the guiding principles set forth by the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment. TMA appreciates the intricate diversity inherent in research contributions and career development paths, fostering an inclusive and equitable environment within institutional assessment practices. Institution acknowledges and emphasizes the intrinsic value of research outputs beyond numerical measurements, and ensures a comprehensive understanding of scholarly endeavors. Through continuous review and refinement of assessment criteria, TMA aims to harmonize its practices with the principles of responsible assessment upheld by CoARA. Furthermore, institution performs awareness initiatives and provides extensive training opportunities for all participants, facilitating the exchange of best practices locally and globally. Upholding transparency as a cornerstone, TMA maintains open avenues of communication and evaluation processes, thereby promoting a culture of accountability and trust. Thus, TMA stands as an institution promoting integrity and excellence, embodying the collaborative approach and forward-thinking attitude.