



Action plan
CoARA
2024-2027



Executive summary

In January 2023, the Governing Council of the Universitat Jaume I unanimously approved its adhesion to the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). This agreement – adopted by the vast majority [of Spanish universities](#) and by the [National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation](#) (ANECA) in April 2023 – involves the adoption of an **action plan for the progressive reform of internal research assessment systems, a commitment to be completed within five years (January 2028)**.

This document defines the **CoARA action plan for the Universitat Jaume I**. The plan is drawn up with the aim of improving the quality, execution and impact of research at the Universitat Jaume I and includes the principles on which the assessment criteria and processes should be based, i.e. quality and impact, diversity, inclusion and collaboration.

The CoARA Action Plan 2024-2027 has been drawn up initially by a small working group and has taken into account both the commitments of the agreement and the recommendations of the document "[Support for CoARA signatories in the preparation of action plans](#)". A key factor in its implementation is the determination of the University's Governing Council, as well as that of the managers in matters related to research assessment.

But for the transformation to permeate the day-to-day running of the University, in addition to the support of directors and managers, the awareness and commitment of the research community as a whole is also required. This is why it is essential that the action plan includes **a consultative and participatory process** involving researchers from different disciplines and at different stages of their research careers, which can potentially provide the initial design with feedback.

In addition, the plan is part of a strategy coordinated with the other partners of the European consortium **European Digital UniverCity (EDUC)**, of which the Universitat Jaume I is a member, through the [EDUC-WIDE action \(EmpoWering EDUC for Inclusive Development of the ERA\)](#).

It is also built by seeking synergies with other actions funded by the European Commission through programmes whose purpose is to strengthen the European Research Area and in which the Universitat Jaume I participates, such as the [Catalisi](#) project - [Catalysation of institutional transformations of Higher Education Institutions through the adoption of acceleration services](#).

1. Introduction - Research Assessment

The Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) is an international initiative that aims to reform the assessment of scientific research. The coalition is composed of universities, public and private research organisations, research funders and national evaluation agencies.

The academic community is calling for a rethink of the way research is assessed. Initiatives such as the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#) (DORA), the Leiden Manifesto for research Metrics (2015) or the joint position of the European University Association (EUA) and Science Europe (2019) also highlight the urgent need for a thorough review of the evaluation of research careers, research projects and the institutions that carry them out.

The fundamental idea underlying all these initiatives is that the journal's impact factor should not replace the assessment of the quality of the work that is published, nor of the individual contributions of the researchers or their professional career. It is undeniable that these systems, based on simple figures to assess quality, have led to the alteration of research agendas in certain areas of knowledge and to changes in scientific communication habits, as well as giving priority to quantity over quality. One of the worst consequences has been the proliferation of behaviours that affect the integrity of science, such as data manipulation, duplicate publication, self-plagiarism or the emergence of so-called "predatory journals".

On 1 December 2022, the European coalition CoARA was formally established. Based on the debate and consensus of the international community, CoARA seeks systemic reform of research assessment and improvement of evaluation practices, with the application of shared principles and clear commitments that should bear fruit in the coming years.

During the first year of activity, the work in CoARA was organised in groups dealing with specific topics and also in national chapters. **In the case of Spain, the Spanish Chapter was created, led by ANECA, the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE) and the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), with the support of, firstly, the Ministry of Universities and, later, the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, and with the participation of more than seventy organisations, including the UJI.** This Spanish chapter, which was officially launched in February 2024, took over from the national forum for the reform of research assessment, which met for the first and only time in January 2023 at the University of Barcelona.

ANECA's adherence to CoARA has been reflected in a series of regulatory changes and criteria reflected in the LOSU and [Royal Decree 678/2023](#), as well as in the Resolution of 19 December 2023 of the General Secretariat of Universities on the [2023 criteria for six-year research periods](#). Also, the first [National Open Science Strategy](#) (ENCA) 2023-2027 has, as one of its strategic objectives, the establishment of new research assessment mechanisms and a system of incentives and recognition that should promote open science practices.

CoARA is based on the qualitative evaluation of research, with peer review as a key element, supported by a responsible use of bibliometric indicators. CoARA also recognises the need to take into account the diversity of research results, methodologies and practices for different fields of knowledge and stages of research careers. In addition, CoARA promotes good practice in research, open science and the dissemination of research activity.

CoARA Commitments

- **Commitment 1:** Recognise the diversity of research contributions and research career stages.
- **Commitment 2:** Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation, for which peer review, supported by the responsible use of quantitative indicators, is essential.

- **Commitment 3:** Abandon the inappropriate uses of journal- and publication-based metrics in research assessment, in particular the inappropriate uses of the journal impact factor (JIF) and the h-index.
- **Commitment 4:** Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations for the evaluation of research activity.
- **Commitment 5:** Pledge the resources needed to reform research assessment in order to achieve the agreed organisational changes.
- **Commitment 6:** Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes.
- **Commitment 7:** Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance and training on evaluation criteria, processes and their use.
- **Commitment 8:** Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and outside the Coalition.
- **Commitment 9:** Communicate progress on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments.
- **Commitment 10:** Evaluate practices, standards and tools based on sound evidence and the current state of research, and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research.

These commitments are to be implemented with regard to:

- Deciding which researchers to recruit, promote or encourage.
- Selecting which research proposals will be funded and identify which research units and organisations will be supported.

2. Assessment of research at the Universitat Jaume I

Assessment activities at the Universitat Jaume I have five main purposes, each of which has its own processes and tools:

- **Monitoring and funding of research structures** (evaluation of groups, allocation of mentions and distribution of the budget between departments and institutes).
- **Promotion of research** through the Research Promotion Plan (evaluation of the different programmes and structures of the plan).
- **Selection and recruitment of teaching and research staff and researchers.**
- **Individual recognition** through the Research Promotion Plan, innovation and transfer activities of the teaching and research staff and the Teaching staff quality incentive plan and recognition of the work of full-time teaching and research staff (recognition of dedication to research).
- **Assessment of the quality of doctoral theses and the resulting mentions and recognitions.**

In order to have an assessment methodology that promotes quality research, avoids conformism among researchers and facilitates the accountability of the investment made for the funding of scientific activity, the Governing Council of the Universitat Jaume I, at its session number 4, on 23 April 2021, approved a scale for assessing research results.

The scale, developed from a series of quality criteria based on internationally accepted standards of scientific production, does not in itself provide an immediately applicable scale for the assessment of research activity. Nevertheless, it does provide clear and transparent criteria for the classification of scientific production in different categories, allowing it to be parameterised. Although the Regulation of the abovementioned scale is already aligned with some of the CoARA commitments (recognition of the differences in publication and citation practices between areas of knowledge, open access publications, etc.), it is undeniably essentially affected by bibliometric indicators.

Article 14 of the Regulation of the scale governs the application of the categories for the assessment of scientific production and artistic creation in the different scales of research activity, which, moreover, are different according to the purpose of the assessment. The logic of this procedure lies in the fact that, although scientific production is a fundamental part of assessment, it allows the most appropriate tools to be used for each purpose. For example, the capacity to attract resources may be decisive when monitoring the activity of the research structures and, moreover, its use may not be appropriate in the assessment of one of the actions of the Research Promotion Plan.

The CoARA action plan aims to create an evaluation environment in which incentives for low-quality or irrelevant research are reduced and the weight of quantitative peer review is gradually increased with a responsible use of bibliometric indicators.

During the implementation of the reform, the following key objectives will also be pursued:

- Simplification of the assessment system (evaluate only if necessary and eliminate possible duplication).
- Respect for field-specific expectations (unforced and context-sensitive application).

The Action Plan contains a set of objectives and actions that are divided into three main areas corresponding to CoARA's individual commitments.

3. Diagnosis of research activity assessment procedures

Objectives

1. Develop an overview of the evaluation of the activity carried out by research structures (groups, departments and institutes).
2. Develop an overview of research evaluation processes at the individual level (scales in staff selection and recruitment and academic career progression).
3. Review the procedures for assessing the quality of doctoral theses and the mentions and recognitions that derive from them.
4. Identify the tools and methods of scientific evaluation, distinguishing those that are aligned with CoARA commitments from those that are not. In particular, the role of the research results assessment scale in the different processes will be reviewed, as it is the instrument that inspires the evaluation of the dissemination of research results (scientific output).
5. Draw up and publish a public summary report on the UJI's research activity evaluation system (this report will outline a general overview constituting an "analysis or assessment of the evaluation").

Structure and organisation

The analysis of the evaluation system of the UJI will be carried out by a small committee (CoARA-UJI). This committee will have the support, essentially, of the Technical Monitoring Committee regulated by Article 17 of the [Regulations of the Universitat Jaume I governing the scale for the assessment of research and artistic creation results](#), approved by the Governing Council in session number 4 on 23 April 2021. This Committee, appointed by the Governing Council at the proposal of the Research and Doctoral Committee, is made up of

researchers with experience in research assessment gained from regularly participating in the different fields and subfields defined by the Spanish National Committee for the Assessment of Research Activity (CNEAI).

In addition, the procedure will be enriched by the shared agenda of the EDUC consortium partners in the field of research activity assessment, which is being developed in parallel under the umbrella of the [EDUC-WIDE \(EmpoWering EDUC for Inclusive Development of the ERA\)](#) project, and also by the progress made by the different working groups of the Spanish Chapter, led by ANECA.

Additionally, the report will be complemented by a public consultation with the research community in order to involve them in the process and to understand their expectations for the reform of the evaluation system. This consultation, which will be carried out in synergy with the [Catalisi](#) project ([Catalysation of institutional transformations of Higher Education Institutions through the adoption of acceleration services](#)), will in turn serve to redefine the current action plan, which should therefore be seen as a living document.

Actions and timeframe

Action	Timeframe
Working meetings by the CoARA-UJI committee.	Periodic, from 2024
Participation in the meetings of the shared agenda on the evaluation of research activity among the partners of the EDUC university alliance.	April 2024-July 2025
Survey and consultation with the research community.	September-October 2024
Incorporation of the recommendations put forward by the CoARA National Chapter.	December 2024 (foreseeable)
Constitution and meetings of the small working group to prepare the final report on the diagnosis.	December 2024-March 2025

Results

Open report on research assessment at the Universitat Jaume I (March 2025). This report will identify the evaluation processes, will outline the areas for improvement in the assessment of the UJI with respect to the CoARA commitments and will include a series of specific proposals to improve the assessment instruments and scales used. The aim of the proposals will be to facilitate the assessment processes and minimise them as far as possible.

4. Responsible assessment of the research

Objectives

1. Implement the new assessment systems adapted to CoARA, starting with a pilot procedure aimed at the assessment of research structures (mainly research groups and institutes) and also at the assessment of research grants from the Universitat Jaume I's Research Promotion Plan.

2. Evaluate and review the effect of the implementation of the new system, so as to be able to examine the positive and negative aspects of the development of the pilot procedures. This evaluation will be carried out in order to adapt possible improvements and changes to the new assessment system.
3. In a second stage, and depending on the results achieved in the previous one, a pilot procedure will be designed for the selection and recruitment of research staff and, finally, for teaching staff. A pilot project will also be designed for research incentive systems.
4. Communicate progress to the research community in order to generate awareness and an appropriate culture of scientific assessment throughout the institution.
5. Depending on the results achieved, implement the responsible assessment system in all research activity assessment procedures.

Actions and timeframe

Action	Timeframe
Development of the pilot test to implement the new assessment system in research structures, groups and institutes.	March 2025-March 2026
Development of a pilot test within the UJI's own plan, in which the main means of assessment is the narrative CVA with the complementary support of the responsible use of quantitative indicators.	March 2025-March 2026
Review and assessment of the pilot test.	September 2026-December 2026
Incorporation of recommendations developed by the EDUC consortium and the CoARA National Chapter.	December 2026
Development of a pilot project for the assessment of the selection and recruitment of research staff in which, in addition to the assessment criteria and minimum reference requirements established by ANECA to obtain accreditation for the different types of teaching staff, quantitative indicators and, as far as possible, the narrative CVA are used in a responsible manner.	December 2026-July 2027
Communication of the results of the pilot test to the UJI research community.	September 2027
Application of the results to individual recognition programmes through the Programme of support for research and innovation and transfer activities of the teaching and research staff and the Teaching staff quality incentive plan and the recognition of the work done by full-time teaching and research staff (recognition of	January 2028

dedication to research).

Implementation of the CoARA plan for all research activity January 2028
assessment procedures.

5. Dissemination and exchange of CoARA experiences

Objectives

1. Publish the CoARA Action Plan, as well as mid-term reports, in different public repositories.
2. Publicise the process of transforming the Universitat Jaume I's assessment system in a way that summarises the whole process, publicises the steps taken and reports on the measures adopted.
3. Promote the exchange of experiences and share the progress made in the process of institutional change in the field of scientific assessment with other universities, both nationally and internationally.

Actions and timeframe

Action	Timeframe
Open publication of the results of the process in public repositories (Repositori UJI, Zenodo).	2026-2027
Conduct a multidisciplinary training course on the new assessment system at the Doctoral School.	From 2026
Participate in the Spanish National Chapter of CoARA.	From January 2024
Generate collaboration and participation links with European projects with which to share experiences, especially with EDUC-WIDE (EmpoWering EDUC for Inclusive Development of the ERA) and Catalisi .	2024-2026

6. Resources needed to implement the plan

Obviously, it will not be possible to achieve the Plan's objectives without committing sufficient resources. Plans are currently underway to commit working hours in the services most directly involved in its design, implementation and assessment, the Office for Cooperation in Research and Technological Development and the Quality Promotion and Assessment Office.

In addition, it is foreseeable that it will be necessary to implement some of the agreements or determinations through modifications to existing research support and management systems and tools. These changes will be implemented through the IT project portfolio or through the acquisition of dedicated software.

In addition, the Vice-Rector's Office with responsibility for research will allocate, on an annual basis, an item for the potential remuneration of external "peers" carrying out assessment tasks arising from the CoARA action plan.

Finally, the participation of the Communication and Publications Service, the Science Outreach and Citizens' Science Unit and the Doctoral School is envisaged for recording audiovisual and training material. The dissemination of this material will be carried out through the Doctoral School's [Research Training Plan](#) in the form of online courses and self-training material.