CoARA Action Plan of Novia University of Applied Sciences 2024-2028

Organisation	Novia University of Applied Sciences
Responsible person	Head of Research Johanna Liinamaa
Contact person	Head of Research Johanna Liinamaa johanna.liinamaa@novia.fi Research coordinator Otto Långvik otto.langvik@novia.fi
Official member of Novia UAS in CoARA National Chapter Finland	Head of Research Johanna Liinamaa johanna.liinamaa@novia.fi (substitute: Otto Långvik)

1. BACKGROUND

The **Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)** is a collaborative initiative aimed at reforming research assessment practices. The overarching goal is to maximize the quality and impact of research by recognizing the diverse outputs, practices and activities of research, researchers, and research organizations. Novia University of Applied Sciences (Novia UAS) signed the agreement on 22.5.2023, and it was accepted by the CoARA secretariat on 29.5.2023.

Agreement and Commitments

- The Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment outlines 10 commitments that guide research assessment reform.
- It establishes a common direction while respecting organizational autonomy.
- The Agreement focuses on specific challenges related to reforming research assessment for researchers, projects, units, and organizations.
- It does not consider research performance at the country level or performance reviews of institutions beyond research activities.

Vision and Approach

- The Coalition will work together based on common principles within an agreed timeframe to facilitate exchanges of information and mutual learning to improve research assessment practices.
- The signatories envision that research assessment should recognize diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research.
- Base research assessment primarily on quantitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.
- Abandon inappropriate uses of research assessment of journal-and publication-based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor and h-index.
- Avoid the use of rankings of research organizations in research assessment.

Novia University of Applied Sciences

At Novia University of Applied Sciences, research, development, and innovation activities are conducted from a needs-oriented and work-life-based approach within six areas of expertise: (1) Culture as a Force for Change, (2) Sustainable Communities and Businesses, (3) Sustainable Shipping, (4) Sustainable Technology, (5) Systemic Transformation to Build Resilience, and (6) Well-being in Society. The goal is to develop society and working life, and to be an active player in the regional and national innovation system.

Novia UAS is committed to good research practices in accordance with the:
- principles of Open Science by signing *The Declaration for Open Science and Research 2020 – 2025*.
- guidelines of TENK (2023): *The Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and Procedures for Handling Alleged Violations of Research Integrity in Finland 2023*.

2. ACTION PLAN

The project is performed for 5 years and is divided into seven work packages (WPs), shown in figure 1. The Action Plan (and WPs described in detail below) is a living document and can be updated at any time within the 5-year time frame according to monitoring carried out by Novia UAS.
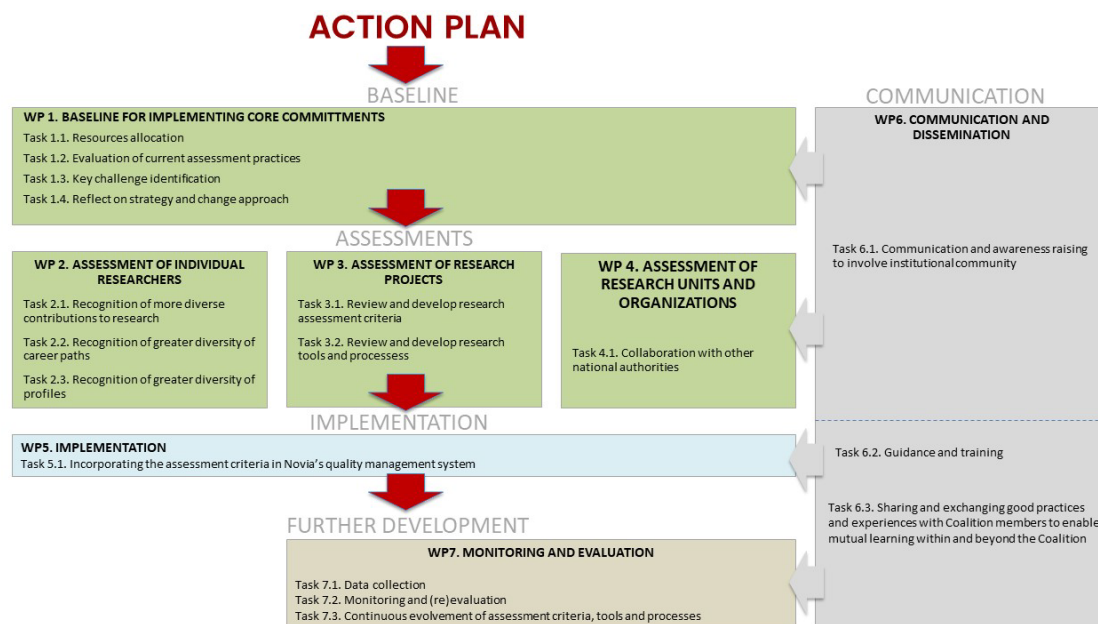

Figure 1. Work packages and interlinkages between WPs towards achieving the commitments stated in the "Agreement on reforming research assessment".

WP1, *Baseline,* forms a starting point for implementing core commitments in line with Novia UAS's strategy, vision and mission. Here, based on Task 1.2. (Evaluation of current assessment practices), Task 1.3. (Key challenge identification) and Task 1.4. (Reflect on strategy and change approach), it is decided on what needs to be changed in Novia UAS.

The aim of **WP2, *Assessment of individual researchers,*** is to broaden the spectrum of what Novia UAS values in individual researchers, while acknowledging that each individual

researcher should not be expected to contribute to all activities at once. **WP3, *Assessment of research projects,*** aims to broaden the spectrum of what Novia UAS values in research, while acknowledging that this may vary across disciplines. In **WP4, *Assessment of research organization,*** criteria for the assessment of Novia, as research performing organization, is assessed in collaboration with other national authorities. The objective is to foster the responsible use of metrics in assessing research performing organization and help to prevent contradictions or incompatibilities between the assessment or research, researchers and research performing organizations.

As for **WP5, *Implementation,*** the objective is to pilot and start using the reviewed and developed assessment criteria, tools, and processes (developed in WP 2, 3 and 4). **WP6 *Communication and dissemination*** is responsible for internal and external communication activities. **WP7, *Monitoring and evaluation,*** ensures continuous monitoring and re-evaluation of the practices, the assessment criteria, and tools, and sharing and gathering information with the Coalition for further research and development work.

A detailed description of the work packages (objectives, tasks, deliverables) is described below. The commitment, implemented under each of the WPs, is presented under each work package in a grey box. A timeline is provided in *Table 1* (Gantt-chart).

Description of work packages

WP1: BASELINE FOR IMPELEMENTING CORE COMMITMENTS

Commitments to be implemented:
-Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organizational changes committed to.

Task 1.1. Resource allocation

Objectives:
- To ensure, that Novia UAS allocates the necessary resources (e.g., budget, staff capacity) to improve research assessment practices within their agreed timeframe.

Deliverables:
- (1) An assessment policy committee created to Novia UAS and (2) Plan on which resources are allocated to implement changes.

Task 1.2. Evaluation of current assessment practices

Objectives:
- To evaluate current assessment practices in terms of alignment with the Principles and Commitments

Deliverables:
- Evaluation report describing current assessment practices, also including self-evaluation of what currently works well and how this can be retained in parallel to any new practice.

Task 1.3. Key challenge identification

Objectives:
- To identify key challenges/gaps/bottlenecks/barriers in Novia UAS with regards to reforming research assessment and the adherence to the action plan
- To identify, which does Novia UAS have the power/authority/resources to address, to define, what will be needed to efficiently address them, and to define what alternatives/strategies can be useful in overcoming some of these challenges.

Deliverables:
- The list of key challenges/gaps/bottlenecks/barriers in Novia to (1) reforming research assessment and to (2) adherence to the action plan
- Document describing the strategy to address the challenges (including alternative strategies)

Task 1.4. Reflect on strategy and change approach

Objectives:
- To define what the process is by which Novia UAS will work on the reform to meet the guiding principles.
- To identify the guiding principles that Novia UAS, as a research community think are priorities in approach to reform.

Deliverables:
- A document describing the change approach and processes that Novia will work on the reform. This document will define (1) what the priorities for Novia are in the reform journey, and therefore, (2) how much emphasis needs to be placed on Tasks in WPs 2,3, 4, and ultimately, (3) what parts will be implemented in WP5.

WP 2: ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL RESEARCHERS

Commitments to be implemented:
- Recognize the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research.
- Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.

- Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index.
- 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.

Task 2.1. Recognition of more diverse contributions to research

Objectives:
- To recognize (with direct involvement of researchers at all career stages) the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research.

Deliverables:
- Reviewed and developed research assessment criteria, tools, and processes for more diverse contributions to research by individual researchers.

Task 2.2. Recognition of greater diversity of career paths

Objectives:
- To develop existing and design new assessment criteria, tools, and processes (with direct involvement of researchers at all career stages), for greater diversity of career paths.

Deliverables:
- Reviewed and developed research assessment criteria, tools, and processes for greater diversity of career paths for individual researchers.

Task 2.3. Recognition of greater diversity of profiles

Objectives:
- To develop existing and design new assessment criteria, tools, and processes (with direct involvement of researchers at all career stages), for greater diversity of profiles with focus on qualitative details.

Deliverables:
- Reviewed and developed research assessment criteria, tools, and processes for greater diversity of profiles.

WP3: ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH PROJECTS

Commitments to be implemented:
-Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index.
- 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.

Task 3.1. Review and develop research assessment criteria

Objectives:
- **(1) Quality of research**: To better recognize the diverse practices and activities that maximize the quality of research, considering the specific nature of research disciplines and other research endeavors.
  Here, quality implies that research is carried out through transparent research processes and methodologies and through research management allowing systematic re-use of previous results. Openness of research, and results that are verifiable and reproducible where applicable, strongly contribute to quality. Openness corresponds to early knowledge and data sharing, as well as open collaboration including societal engagement where appropriate.
- **(2) Gender equality**: To ensure gender equality, equal opportunities, and inclusiveness.
  Here, gender balance, the gender dimension, and diversity in the broader sense (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, socio-economic, disability) in research teams at all levels is considered, and in the content of research, development and innovation.
- **(3) Responsible use of quantitative indicators**: To move towards research assessment criteria that focus primarily on quality (i.e., move away from inappropriate uses of metrics), and to abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index.

Deliverables:
- Reviewed and developed research assessment criteria that better recognize (1) quality of research, (2) gender equality and (3) responsible use of quantitative indicators in the internal research processes at Novia UAS.

Task 3.2. Review and develop research tools and processes

Objectives:
- To allow better research proposal evaluation. Before RDI proposal is submitted from Novia UAS, it must pass Novia's internal evaluation in the "Thinking Portfolio" (the new project management system at Novia UAS). This task's objective is to incorporate Task 3.1 results as part of Novia's project registration at "Thinking Portfolio".

Deliverables:
- Research assessment criteria that consider (1) Quality of research, (2) Gender equality and (3) responsible use of quantitative indicators is incorporated into the "Thinking Portfolio".

WP4: ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS AND UNITS

Commitments to be implemented:
-Avoid the use of rankings of research organizations in research assessment.
- With the direct involvement of research organizations and researchers at all career stages, review and develop criteria for assessing research units and research performing organizations, while promoting interoperability.

Task 4.1. Collaboration with other national authorities

Objectives:
- To co-operate with national assessment consortia in reviewing and adapting criteria for the assessment of research performing units and organizations (including universities, research centers, and research infrastructures)
- To develop new criteria where needed, based on evidence in collaboration with other national authorities.
- To ensure that the methodologies and processes are interoperable, while simultaneously respecting the necessary adaptation to each context.

Deliverables:
- National, interoperable methodologies and processes, that increase the ability to assess quality by enabling recognition of all contributions to quality research by research units and institutions.

WP5: IMPLEMENTATION

Commitments to be implemented:
-Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use.

Task 5.1. Incorporating the assessment criteria in Novia UAS's quality management system

Objectives:
- To help Novia UAS to reflect the processes and include the new criteria into the quality management system.

Deliverables:
- New assessment criteria (individual researchers and research projects) developed in the Coalition are incorporated in the quality management system.

WP6: COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION

Commitments to be implemented:
-Communicate progress made on adherence to the principles and implementation of the Commitments.
-Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition.
-Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use.

Task 6.1. Communication and awareness raising to involve institutional community

Objectives:
- To inform of the reform among all actors (researchers at different career stages, research support staff, administrators) in Novia UAS, and transparently communicate and inform the criteria, tools and processes used for research assessment.
- To engage those being assessed in the development and design of assessment criteria and processes.

Deliverables:
- Internal communication events (webinars to raise awareness and to inform applicants of assessment processes and allow for questions and answers.
- Webpages and reports to ensure transparency of research evaluation processes.

Task 6.2. Guidance, training and support

Objectives:
- To train researchers and assessors in the use of the reviewed criteria, tools, and processes.

Deliverables:
- Training event on the use of new assessment criteria, processes used.
- A website containing info on new assessment criteria and processes used.

Task 6.3. Sharing and exchanging good practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition

Objectives:
- To ensure that Novia UAS (among other members of the Coalition, nationally and internationally) exchange and make use of information for mutual learning and update one another on the progress made to facilitate collective progress.

Deliverables:
- Publicly shared action plan (year 1). Novia's action plan is shared with the Coalition via a dedicated *Zenodo* community.
- Progress made on adherence to the principles and implementation of the Commitments is communicated regularly on the national and international events.

WP7: MONITORING AND SELF-EVALUATION

Commitments to be implemented:
-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.

Task 7.1. Data collection

Objectives:
- To collect data to support monitoring, evaluation, and mutual learning among the members of the Coalition.

Deliverables:
- Data is made openly available for the members of the Coalition for evidence gathering and research.

Task 7.2. Monitoring and (re)evaluation

Objectives:
- To monitor at fixed intervals, whenever broad reforms to assessments are implemented, or when problems are identified.
- To gain understanding if assessment practices achieved the desired goals.

Deliverables:
- Updated action plan within the 5-year time frame according to monitoring carried out by Novia made openly available.
- In year 5: Publicly shared self-assessment of the action plan
- Gathered monitoring and re-evaluation data made openly available for evidence gathering and research.

Task 7.3. Continuous evolvement of assessment criteria, tools and processes

Objectives:
- Continuous development of assessment criteria, tools and processes based on learning from own evaluations and those of others in the Coalition.
- To monitor and re-evaluate practices, the assessment criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research for further development.
- Engage in evolutive assessment based on new evidence as it becomes available in Coalition.

Deliverables:
- Periodically updated assessment criteria, tools and processes based on research on research.

3. **SCHEDULE**

At least one cycle of review and development of the action plan is done within five years of signing the Agreement (table 1), of which the first half consists of the actual assessments (individual researchers, research projects, and research organization). During the second half, an increasing emphasis will be laid on implementation, monitoring, and evaluation and communication and dissemination.

Table 1. A Gantt-Chart presenting the timetable for the Work Packages and Tasks.

Action plan	2024			2025				2026				2027				2028			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
WP1. Baseline for implementing core committments	WP1																		
1.1 Resources allocation																			
1.2 Evaluation of current assessment practices																			
1.3 Key challenge identification																			
1.4 Reflect on strategy and change approach																			
WP2. Assessment of individual researchers			WP2																
2.1 Recognition of more diverse contributions to research																			
2.2 Recognition of greater diversity of career paths																			
2.3 Recognition of greater diversity of profiles																			
WP3. Assessment of research projects					WP3														
3.1 Review and develop research assessment criteria																			
3.2 Review and develop research tools and processes																			
WP4. Assessment of research organizations and units							WP4												
4.1 Collaboration with other national /regional /organizational authorities																			
WP5. Implementation											WP5								
5.1 Incorporating the assessment criteria in Novia's quality management system																			
WP6. Communication and dissemination		WP6																	
6.1 Communication and awareness raising to involve institutional community																			
6.2 Guidance and training																			
6.3 Sharing and exchanging good practices and experiences with Coalition																			
WP7. Monitoring and evaluation															WP7				
7.1 Data collection																			
7.2 Monitoring and (re)evaluation																			
7.3 Continuous evolvement of assessment criteria, tools and processes																			