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The University of the Arts Helsinki - CoARA Action Plan 2024-2028

Uniarts Helsinki signed the Agreement on the Reform of Research Assessment & Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment in November 2022. This document presents the plans by the Uniarts Helsinki to implement the CoARA commitments.

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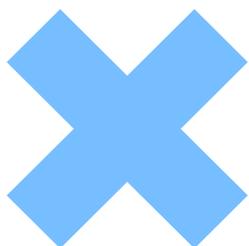
Background

[The University of the Arts Helsinki \(Uniarts Helsinki\)](#) was established in 2013 by a merger of the Academy of Fine Arts, Theatre Academy and Sibelius Academy. Uniarts Helsinki provides high-level education in music, fine arts, theatre, and dance, and it is the only university in Finland focusing exclusively on education and research in the arts. Although the first research activities were established at the academies as early as the 1980s, the primary focus of the academies has been on educating artists.

In recent years, the scope of research activities has increased and continues to grow into a more prominent sector within the university. In the current strategy 2021-2030, Uniarts Helsinki aims at developing and renewing the focus areas and at defining a university-level research profile “that is based on a vibrant connection between artistic activities, university education in the arts and the surrounding society”. Uniarts Helsinki established *arts research* as an umbrella term to cover research in the arts, research in arts education and artistic research.

At Uniarts Helsinki, the principles of the research assessment reform are based on various declarations that the university has signed and is committed to. Uniarts Helsinki has signed the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), which emphasises the need to assess research on its own merits instead of relying on journal-based metrics as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles. The character of research traditions at Uniarts Helsinki suit the DORA principles of the value and impact of *all* research outputs, not just research publications. Uniarts Helsinki signed the Agreement on the Reform of Research Assessment & Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment in November 2022.

Researcher evaluation and research assessment at Uniarts Helsinki is quite well aligned with the national policies that are valid in Finland and that strongly emphasise qualitative and responsible assessment. Uniarts Helsinki is committed to the Recommendation for the Responsible Evaluation of a Researcher in Finland (2020). Uniarts Helsinki is also committed to the Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and Procedures for Handling Alleged



Violations of Research Integrity in Finland:
https://tenk.fi/sites/default/files/2023-11/RI_Guidelines_2023.pdf and to the
TENK recommendation on the Researcher's Curriculum Vitae:
https://tenk.fi/sites/default/files/2021-06/TENK_CV_template_2020.pdf

In accordance with its strategic goals, Uniarts Helsinki is implementing a development programme for research in 2020-2024 as part of its action plan. The programme aims at the development of research environment structures and research management, strategic research profile and objectives of research activities. The first-ever Uniarts Helsinki Research Assessment 2021-2022 was carried out as part of this development programme:
<https://taju.uniarts.fi/handle/10024/7645>.

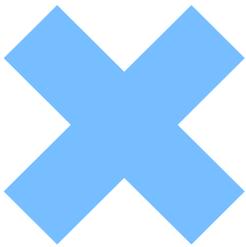
The research assessment was completed in accordance with the national policies of responsible assessment. Case study templates intended for artistic research and impact assessment were introduced as part of the research assessment. The purpose of the artistic research case studies was to complement the self-assessment of the research units and allow the units to demonstrate the quality of their artistic research. The aim was to provide a platform for the units to bring forward distinctive features of artistic research that are crucial for understanding its quality and that might not become evident through more traditional research assessment indicators. The purpose of societal impact case studies was to allow the units to demonstrate societal impact of the research conducted at the unit.

As regards responsible researcher evaluation, Uniarts Helsinki has launched a development project related to its HR policy and HR structure. The project will run until the end of 2026. Steps in responsible researcher evaluation have also been taken in the updating of the docentship (Title of Docent) guidelines (the guidelines have been updated in 2024), for example, which has involved the compiling of clearer application and assessment criteria.

CoARA measures at Uniarts Helsinki

Uniarts Helsinki's special characteristic is having art at the centre of the activities. What lies at the centre of Uniarts Helsinki's assessment development is determining how art can be assessed responsibly as a genuine part of research so that renewed assessment practices aim at improving the quality of research/art.

Uniarts Helsinki is engaged to all CoARA core commitments. In its CoARA Action Plan, Uniarts Helsinki focuses especially on the following CoARA commitments: 1) Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research 2) Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.



In its CoARA Action Plan, Uniarts Helsinki focuses on two concrete reforms: 1) Renewed researcher recruitment and evaluation practices (incl. development of the researcher's career model) 2) Development of responsible researcher skills

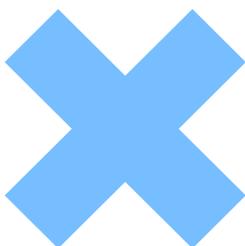
1. Renewed researcher recruitment and evaluation practices

In its responsible researcher evaluation and research assessment, Uniarts Helsinki will develop the recognition of a more diverse range of competence in researcher evaluations. Uniarts Helsinki will also compile more detailed and responsible definitions of goals and criteria related to assessments and recruitments.

A significant part of Uniarts Helsinki's professorships is based on artistic merits. The job description of these professors does not necessarily include research but high-level artistic activities that are comparable to research. Uniarts Helsinki aims to examine and define more accurately what research entails and who carries out research in the Uniarts Helsinki context. Through this work, Uniarts Helsinki promotes competence assessment and ensures that recruitments and assessments are conducted responsibly.

A considerable part of Uniarts Helsinki's research is artistic research where artistic outputs form an essential part of the research content and where the authors are artist-researchers. In its CoARA Action Plan, Uniarts Helsinki's aim is to make it easier in the research community to recognise and assess what distinguishes artistic research from other artistic activities, i.e. what makes it count as research. It is not sensible to create general indicators for assessing artistic activities, but it is important to develop the assessment criteria and methods. When assessing artistic research, there must be a sufficient range of methods for taking various competence areas into consideration (e.g. technical command of tools, work in various contexts, impact of one's personal expression, diverse experience).

Uniarts Helsinki will make determined steps to develop its HR policy to better respond to the challenges that it will face in the future. At the same time, it also aims to fix structural shortcomings. The teaching and research staff's position and work duties will be clarified within the framework of the development project. Updating of the career model is part of the HR policy development plan, and according to the current estimate, the updates will be completed in



2026. The long-term goal of the ongoing reform is to establish 1) a teaching-oriented and 2) a research-oriented career system for academic positions.

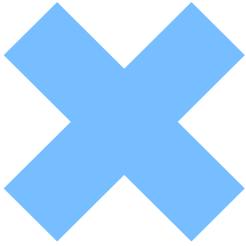
As part of its CoARA plan, Uniarts Helsinki wants to develop the already existing teaching and research staff recruitment process in the spirit of CoARA's responsible researcher assessment towards a path where expectations, competence and criteria have been articulated more clearly both to applicants and to the assessors. Uniarts Helsinki has recognised that it must clarify the recruitment of employees into teaching and research positions while also taking the updating needs of the career system into consideration:

Development measures related to recruitment guidelines and procedures (incl. criteria, process, assessment guidelines):

- Either a clearer research and/or artistic orientation will be established for recruitments according to the strategy and/or competence needs of the recruiting unit so that both the recruiter and the person being recruited have a clearer understanding of the nature of the position.
- In researcher evaluations, competence needs will be clarified, which will promote the transparency of application processes.
- Expert statement practices will be developed comprehensively.
- Uniarts Helsinki will establish more detailed practices for recognising artistic merits.

2. Development of researcher skills

Uniarts Helsinki's background is in traditional arts education provided by independent arts institutions. Alongside education-orientedness with its wider selection of degree programmes, multidisciplinary research has taken on a stronger role, and this is also reflected on Uniarts Helsinki's strategy. As a young university, Uniarts Helsinki must strengthen the position of research and thereby the development of researcher skills, as well. In the context of responsible assessment of researchers and research, researchers are assessed on the basis of a more diverse range of competence. Because Uniarts Helsinki's doctoral candidates have often completed a bachelor's or a master's degree in the arts, they do not always have sufficient readiness to apply general or more field-specific researcher skills, such as skills related to academic writing, responsible research or, on a wider scale, methodology or the philosophy of science and art. As their researcher skills are increased, researchers learn to recognise and verbalise their personal competence better than before. Competence and accuracy related to methodologies and research ethics are part of conducting responsible research. Better researcher skills and the improved ability to put these skills into words will also help in clarifying recruitment



criteria and creates a basis for the researcher potential emerging from the university.

Development of researcher skills would speed up the completion of doctoral degrees. Development measures aiming at reforming Uniarts Helsinki's doctoral education will take the objectives of Uniarts Helsinki's CoARA Action Plan into consideration. This will help in promoting the academics' shared views of researcher skills and related criteria. It is important to find a balance between the uniqueness of specific artistic fields and the things that connect them and to establish a joint terminology that helps in understanding the differences between the fields.

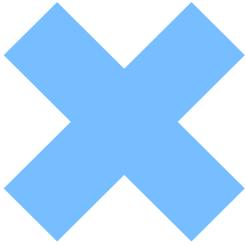
Uniarts Helsinki will promote the strengthening of researcher skills as part of the CoARA plan through the following measures:

1. development of responsible research and method-related competence in bachelor's and master's studies as well as in doctoral studies
2. training for doctoral candidates' supervisors
3. promotion and centralisation of researcher skills
4. the development work for doctoral education will take the following measures into consideration. Research competence will be incorporated as part of study planning during bachelor's and master's studies.

Implementation of the CoARA plan at Uniarts Helsinki

Uniarts Helsinki signed the CoARA agreement on 15 November 2022. The working group that has prepared the CoARA Action Plan at Uniarts Helsinki has been the working group for open science and research, which has representatives from the researcher staff, library, HR Services and Research Services. Through this work arrangement, Uniarts Helsinki has aimed at ensuring that the planning has involved people with expertise in various fields as widely as possible and looking into the views of the researcher community already in the beginning stages of the planning. The CoARA process has been discussed by the executive group of Uniarts Helsinki and the executive group for research and doctoral education. A draft proposal of the CoARA Plan was discussed by the executive group for research and doctoral education in April 2024, and the vice rector for research approved the plan on 25 April 2024.

Senior Advisor Riikka Palonkorpi, Library Director Tommi Harju and the Working group for open science and research were responsible for preparing the plan.



CoARA monitoring and schedule

At Uniarts Helsinki, the CoARA Action Plan is regarded as an essential part of the more extensive quality development of research and research assessment. The agreed-upon measures are part of the existing processes and quality management. These include the rector's annual discussions, visits of the Research Advisory Board, action plans as well as researcher recruitment reforms and the career model.

No separate training on the CoARA measures will be organised for researchers, and instead, these measures will be incorporated into existing processes. Implementation of the Action Plan will begin in the spring of 2024 and end in 2028. The implementation and steering of the process will take place regularly in the open science working group. The group will report regularly to the steering group for doctoral education and research.

Uniarts Helsinki will actively participate in CoARA events, the activities of the CoARA national chapter in Finland and other working groups that are relevant in terms of national coordination.