

CoARA Action Plan 2024–2027

Oulu University of Applied Sciences

Organisation: Oulu University of Applied Sciences

Responsible and contact person: RDI Director Noora Jansson, noora.jansson@oamk.fi

Other persons contributing to the Action Plan: Lead Researchers Sanna Tyni, Mika-Petri Laakkonen, and Niko Männikkö

Accepted by: Oulu University of Applied Sciences Management Group 13.05.2024

Introduction

Oulu University of Applied Sciences (Oamk) is a multidisciplinary and international higher education community of 9,000 students and approximately 460 employees. Our close cooperation with companies and communities creates the basis for our students' high-level and up-to-date competence. The cornerstones of our operations are transparency, sustainability, and effectiveness. The focus areas of our research, development and innovation activities are low-carbon initiatives, digital solutions, and business development.

Oulu University of Applied Sciences (Oamk) signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) in 2023. The first steps towards a new way to review research and development in Oamk were taken by evaluating the current state of operations and requirements of development to be fulfilled to achieve more responsible research and development assessment. In the preliminary Action Plan for research and development activities (for both R&D and educational activities), the joint title "applied research" is used to emphasize the application-oriented nature of the research and development activities of the university of applied sciences compared to the academic research of the university field.

In this document, Oamk describes the connection of CoARA Action Plan to other guiding documents, as well as presents the implementation plan for the years 2024–2027. The development plan is divided in two phases. During the years 2024–2025 Oamk will focus on the building up the required tools, mentoring programs, and operating model to be implemented in coming years. The second phase, the years 2026–2027, will be focusing on the implementation of the Action Plan, evaluations, as well as the further development of the Action Plan for the years 2028–2032.

The key commitments and documents guiding Oamk's operations

Oamk is committed to several guidelines and programmes, which are also supporting the applied research assessment.

National and international level:

Oamk CoARA Action Plan 2024 – 2027
13.05.2024

- Law for universities of applied sciences, available in Finnish and Swedish: [Ammattikorkeakoululaki 14.11.2014/932](#) (Finlex, 2014)
- The Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and procedures for Handling Alleged Violations of Research Integrity in Finland 2023, available in Finnish, Swedish, and English: [TENK 4/2023](#) (TENK, 2023)
- Declaration for open science and research 2020 – 2025, available in Finnish, Swedish, and English: [Open Science Coordination in Finland, Federation of Finnish Learned Societies 3:2020](#) (Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, 2020)
- Audit register for higher education institutions: [FINEEC audits 2024 – 2030](#) (FINEEC, 2024)
- [CoARA - Agreement on reforming research assessment](#) (ARRA, 2022)
- Arene: [Sustainable, responsible and carbon-neutral universities of applied sciences](#) and [Kestävä ja vastuullinen tutkimus-, kehitys- ja innovaatiotoiminta ammattikorkeakouluissa](#) (available only in Finnish)

Oamk's own strategies and guidelines (available in Finnish):

- Oamk, Strategy 2024 – 2028: [Oamk, Strategia 2024 – 2028](#) (Oamk, 2024)
- Oamk, Guidelines and decisions for RDI operations: [Oamk, TKI-toimintaa ohjaavat säädökset, säännöt ja päätökset, 11.1.2022](#) (Oamk, 2022)
- Principles for open access publication in Oamk: [Oamkin avoimen julkaisemisen periaatteet](#) (Oulun yliopisto, 2024)

CoARA core commitments and Oamk's CoARA core commitments

Oamk reviewed the core commitments of CoARA and decided to focus on some of them in the first phase of development. As the Action Plan is launched and first steps have been taken, the next phase will focus on the other commitments and how to further strengthen the applied research assessment.

The chosen core commitments in Oamk are bolded in the list of core commitments of CoARA (2023):

- 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**
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
4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment

Oamk CoARA Action Plan 2024 – 2027
13.05.2024

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

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

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

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

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

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

Action Plan 2024–2027

The overview of the Oamk’s CoARA Action Plan for the years 2024–2027 is presented in the table 1. Table also contains the preliminary plans to update the Action Plan for the time period 2028–2032.

Table 1. The overview of the Oamk’s CoARA Action Plan for the years 2024–2028.

2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Preparatory actions to launch the Action Plan	Implementation of measures and preparation for assessment	Implementation of measures and preparation for assessment	Implementation of measures and preparation for assessment	<i>Overall evaluation of the period 2024–2027, evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures</i>
Internal information for Oamk staff	Preparation for follow-up reporting	Annual evaluation of the implementation and effects of the measures 2025 - follow-up reporting	Annual evaluation of the implementation and effects of the measures 2026 - follow-up reporting	<i>Annual evaluation of the implementation and effects of the measures 2027 - follow-up reporting</i>
Initiation of the first actions	External communication	Status check of the commitments of the 1st phase of the Action Plan and updates for the years 2026–2027	Preparation of the Action Plan 2028–2032	<i>Launching the Action Plan 2028–2032</i>
	Situation overview and update of the Action Plan	An update of the Action Plan according to the commitments of the 2nd phase is being prepared		

Oamk CoARA Action Plan 2024 – 2027
13.05.2024

Operational plans 2024–2025

The Action Plan is planned in more detailed level for the upcoming years of 2024–2025 (table 2). The benchmarking of current situation highlighted the need for some basic preparations to support the launch of the Action Plan. Therefore, the first two years are reserved for preparatory actions and launching the implementation of the Action Plan.

Table 2. The more detailed implementation plan for the upcoming years of 2024–2025. This plan will be updated yearly, and it will be a supporting document for the core team of RDI unit to launch and follow-up of the implementation of the Action Plan.

Commitment	Action plan	Deliverable	Schedule
1. Preparation of CoARA Action Plan and presentation to the Oamk staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Preparation of CoARA Action Plan b. Publishing of the action plan in Oamk intranet and arrangement of internal launch events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoARA documentation and Action Plan available at intranet • Action Plan introduced to staff 	2024
2. Tools and instructions for responsible applied research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Preparation of required tools and instructions to support the development of assessment of responsible applied research b. Collaboration with other strategic working groups, e.g. responsibility and sustainable development c. Development of supporting processes and materials for development of expertise off Oamk staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools and instructions available at Oamk intranet • Supporting and guiding for staff to develop research expertise 	2024→
3. Assessment principles and indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Preparation of assessment process, principles, and indicators b. Preparation of initiation of assessment process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment process, principles, and indicators available at Oamk intranet • Initiation of assessment process 	2024–2025
4. Identifying and recognising the development of a responsible applied researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Implementation of the responsible research assessment process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual discussions on the identification and recognition of staff's expertise development 	2025→

Oamk CoARA Action Plan 2024 – 2027
13.05.2024

<p>5. <i>Monitoring and reporting of CoARA activities</i></p>	<p>a. Preparing of the annual follow-up and update of CoARA Action Plan b. Define a channel for follow-up reporting (inner and outer communication channels)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual follow-up report and updated CoARA Action Plan • Annually published report for Oamk staff as well as for other stakeholders 	<p>2024–2025 →</p>
<p>6. <i>Cooperation between RDI and educational units</i></p>	<p>a. Definition of operational principled of responsible applied research b. Strengthening of exchange of information change between units</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational principles for responsible applied research for RDI and educational units are defined • Common opportunities and channels for information exchange to enable interaction between units 	<p>2024 →</p>
<p>7. <i>Responsible applied research as part of Oamk's impact work</i></p>	<p>a. Recognition of Oamk staff's expertise for our stakeholders and regional development b. Strengthening of communication of Oamk's applied research work c. Integration of responsible applied research to collaboration with stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and marketing of Oamk responsible applied research and introductions of our researchers • Regular communication for stakeholders about Oamk responsible applied research • Strengthened consensus between the Oamk and partners about the principles for responsible applied research 	<p>2025 →</p>

Possible challenges and issues to be considered

Oamk has gone through a massive organisation development process one year ago. In this process, a new R&D unit was formed and during the previous year strategy and operations of the new unit has been constructed and launched. R&D unit is still developing and processing the operations and management. Therefore, Oamk has a great opportunity to integrate CoARA Action Plan into core operations during the overall development process.

The main challenges recognised during the planning of CoARA Action Plan were considering the ongoing development work of R&D unit, as well as the unit of education. It was agreed to try to avoid duplicate work and support the integration of already existing or underdevelopment strategies and development plans. Oamk has a firm background in integrating sustainable development and responsibility into the core operations, and this also supports the implementation of CoARA Action Plan.

As the universities of applied sciences in Finland are focused on the development-oriented projects, transnational research, as well as interdisciplinarity, it was observed that Oamk emphasises the development-based orientation to research and will support the variety of career opportunities in the UAS world. The organisational support towards different career paths will be one of the core issues to be taken care of. The evaluation criteria of employees' expertise should be broad and based on both quality, and

Oamk CoARA Action Plan 2024 – 2027
13.05.2024

quantitative measures. As Oamk wants to support the development of expertise, we identified several development cases to build up an open and fair evaluation practises, recruitment processes, as well as the opportunities to head towards different career paths.

In the first years of implementing Action Plan, Oamk will focus to build up a supporting documents, tools, and mentoring process. After the initiating actions, focus will turn towards evaluation and further development of Action Plan. Open dialogue between the managers and employees is important to keep in mind during the process. In the long term, Oamk would like to observe open and good communication and collaboration between the R&D and educational units. The aim is to offer a possibility to expand expertise in both fields and strengthen the core expertise of each individual employee.

The CoARA Action Plan supports Oamk's aim to be an open and trustfully partner in our region, as well as in national and international level. As we are aiming towards international collaboration, it should be considered also to translate the core principles, strategies, and guiding documentation in English to support the open access for our international staff, students, as well as partners. Systematic development and open evaluation process provide an excellent opportunity to develop our role as a R&D organisation.

Summary

The key objectives of Oamk for reforming applied research assessment during 2024–2028 can be summarised:

- To enhance open access for materials supporting the development of applied research and assessment among staff.
- Widen the development and research-based career paths and support the expanding of expertise among staff.
- Broaden the assessment criteria of applied research in UAS, alongside with strengthen of collaboration between R&D and educational unit.
- Share and communicate the best principles of development work with other HEI's as well as informing the stakeholders about the development work done among the themes.
- Create a systemic development and evaluation process to be implemented among the Oamk operations.

References

Arene (2020) Sustainable, responsible and carbon-neutral universities of applied sciences, November 2020, available at <https://www.arene.fi/wp-content/uploads/Raportit/2020/Sustainable%2C%20responsible%20and%20carbon-neutral%20universities%20of%20applied%20sciences.pdf? t=1606145574>.

Arene (2022) Kestävä ja vastuullinen tutkimus-, kehitys- ja innovaatiotoiminta ammattikorkeakouluissa, August 2022, available at <https://www.humak.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/arene-2022-kestava-ja-vastuullinen-TKI.pdf>.

Oamk CoARA Action Plan 2024 – 2027
13.05.2024

ARRA (2022) Agreement on reforming research assessment, 20 July 2022, available at https://coara.eu/app/uploads/2022/09/2022_07_19_rra_agreement_final.pdf.

CoARA Commitments (2023), available at <https://coara.eu/agreement/the-commitments/>.

Federation of Finnish Learned Societies (2020) Declaration for open science and research 2020 – 2025, 3:2020, available at <https://edition.fi/tsv/catalog/view/79/29/192-1>.

FINEEC (2024) Audit register for higher education institutions, available at <https://www.karvi.fi/en/evaluations/higher-education/audit-register-higher-education-institutions>.

Finlex (2014) Law for universities of applied sciences 14.11.2014/932, available at <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2014/20140932>.

Oamk (2022) Guidelines and decisions for RDI operations, TKI-toimintaa ohjaavat säädökset, säännöt ja päätökset, 11.1.2022.

Oamk (2024) Strategy 2024 – 2028, Oulu University of Applied Sciences, available at <https://oamk.fi/strategia/>.

Oulun yliopisto (2024) Principles for open access publication in Oamk, Oulun ammattikorkeakoulun julkaisijan opas: Avoin julkaiseminen, 29.4.2024, available at <https://libguides oulu.fi/oamk/julkaisijalle/avoinjulkaiseminen>.

TENK (2023) The Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and procedures for Handling Alleged Violations of Research Integrity in Finland 2023, 4/2023, available at https://tenk.fi/sites/default/files/2023-05/RI_Guidelines_2023.pdf.