



CoARA Action Plan

St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences

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Introduction and aim of the document

In October 2022 St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences (STPUAS) joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) and signed its Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA) in order to actively support and encourage initiatives fostering the plurality of research activities, with a specific focus on applied research, innovation and impact. As part of this commitment, every signatory agrees (see ARRA, chapter IV.) to start an institutional process of developing or reviewing mechanisms, instruments and criteria used for research assessment in their own fields of activity and of responsibility, in order to introduce procedures and practices which are more in line with the principles of the Agreement.

The process builds on a corresponding Action Plan with measures and a timeline, which is to be shared with the whole community, regularly revised showing institutional progress on the commitment and the principles. This document presents the Action Plan of STPUAS.

About

STPUAS is a University of Applied Sciences based in St. Pölten, Lower Austria, providing education for about 4000 students at Bachelor and Master level in different areas, ranging from media and digital technologies, informatics and security, as well as rail technology, through communications and management, to health and social sciences.

Beside education, research and knowledge-transfer / innovation build a strong pillar of STPUAS activities, clustered in six research institutes and 3 overarching research centers. Research topics are strongly linked to the education areas and a strong intertwining of education and research is required by the strategic profile. National and international institutional cooperations support STPUAS researchers and academics in their path to a PhD degree. The quality criteria for STPUAS research activities have been defined by the UAS Board and published in the White Paper Quality in Research. STPUAS is a signatory of the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities, has published already in 2017 its first Open Access Policy and supports its employees and researchers in making their research results freely available, whereas funding as well as an institutional repository are available.

Since 2020, STPUAS has been leading the European University E³UDRES², which got confirmed in 2023 for its second phase and currently includes nine institutions with a strong focus on applied sciences and a strategic position in their respective regional innovation ecosystems. International orientation and regional embedding go hand in hand.

In the context of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) process, in 2020 STPUAS was recognized with the HR Excellence in Research Award by the European Commission, undergoing its first Interim Assessment in 2023, resulting in a revised HRS4R Action Plan. As part of the process, an OTM-R Policy was published and the existing career model for teaching & research staff was revised.

STPUAS is member of EUA and of EURASHE.

Quality criteria for STPUAS research activities have been agreed upon and published in the White Paper Quality in Research, which explicitly establishes CoARA as reference framework.

Process

STPUAS participation in the CoARA efforts is strongly supported by its management, in line with the institutional engagement in other European initiatives and with the institutional profile and strategy (published [here](#)).

From an administration and management perspective, the Center for Research and Cooperation (F&K) and the Center for Higher Education Development and Quality Management (HSE-QM) were involved from the very beginning and represent STPUAS in CoARA.

For the direct involvement of the research community, the successful path from the HRS4R implementation process has been adopted again: The UAS Board Committee for Quality Development in Research is involved as active Steering Group, providing on the one hand strategic orientation and frameworks, on the other hand being a very active source of input and of discussions about possible measures. The main advantage of this group as far as HRS4R and CoARA are concerned is that per definition its composition covers all research career levels R1 to R4 and all STPUAS research institutes, thus reflecting the disciplinary breadth.

This Committee was therefore involved in the preparation and critical reflection of this document as well as in the already performed first implementation steps, e.g. in the definition and reflection of the first Research Assessment pilots.

Evaluation and if necessary, adaptation of this Action Plan is included in the annual institutional management cycle.

Focus and priorities

Research and development at UAS in Austria are strongly embedded in the national legal framework but no global budget is provided at national level for R&D financing, i.e. all R&D activities of UAS have to be funded by third parties, either from regional, national or international grants, or from companies and other public funding.

Based on this situation, practically all R&D activities (including knowledge-transfer and innovation) performed at STPUAS are subject to external quality assurance and evaluation: grant proposals, tenders, periodic project reports (at least once per year), individual project deliverables, and of course publications.

That is why STPUAS chose to focus its efforts about Research Assessment on the following areas:

- Assessment and development of research units (i.e., institutes and centers)
- Assessment and development of institutional research activities as a whole (across research units)
- National and international level initiatives for a systemic change in the EHEA and ERA

as addressed in the following chapter.

As far as individual careers are concerned, STPUAS released its revised career model for teaching & research staff, which includes a strong connection among three equally important pillars: education activities / didactics; research activities / science and scholarship; occupational field / practical experience. The further development of support measures and of the internal processes (e.g. hearings) is part of the ongoing efforts and already considered in the HRS4R process, that is why this focus is not included in this document.

Measures

Nr	Action	Status	Responsibilities	Timeframe
1	Active engagement in the CoARA Working Group about Transdisciplinarity, Applied/Practice-Based Research and Impacts	In progress	HSE-QM together with representatives from the research community and with the Committee for Quality Development in Research	Q4/2023-Q4/2025
2	Active engagement in the CoARA Working Group about Experiments in Assessment	In progress	HSE-QM together with the Committee for Quality Development in Research and with Heads of Research Institutes / Centers	Q4/2023-Q4/2025
3	Introduction and roll-out of institutional research assessment at the level of research units (institutes / centers)	Pilot process introduced in 2023, two further pilots to be conducted in 2024 before roll-out in 2025	HSE-QM and F&K with the Committee for Quality Development in Research and with the support of other administrative units	Q2/2023-Q4/2025
4	Active engagement in the E³UDRES² European University Alliance for spreading the involvement in and implementation of the ARRA principles behind the institutional borders	In progress	Institutional representatives of STPUAS in the Boards and Work Packages of the Alliance in several alliance-related projects (e.g. Ent-e-novators)	Ongoing
5	Introduction of an institutional research report supporting a broad and comprehensive evaluation	Planned	HSE-QM and F&K with the Committee for Quality Development in	Prototype in 2025

	and reflection of the variety of research and innovation activities at STPUAS		Research and with other administrative units	
6	Implementing tools and showcasing good practices of strong intertwining between education, research & innovation, and occupational fields, as a means of reflection of variety / difference of approaches suitable to a UAS	Planned	Research Institutes / Centers together with the Committee for Quality Development in Research and with Academic Directors of different Study Programmes, HSE-QM and F&K	2025-2026
7	When making the decision for a new international ranking (substituting U-Multirank), consistently consider the need for transparency and breadth corresponding to the principles of CoARA	In progress	HSE-QM	2024