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CoARA Action Plan, 2024-2027

1. Introduction

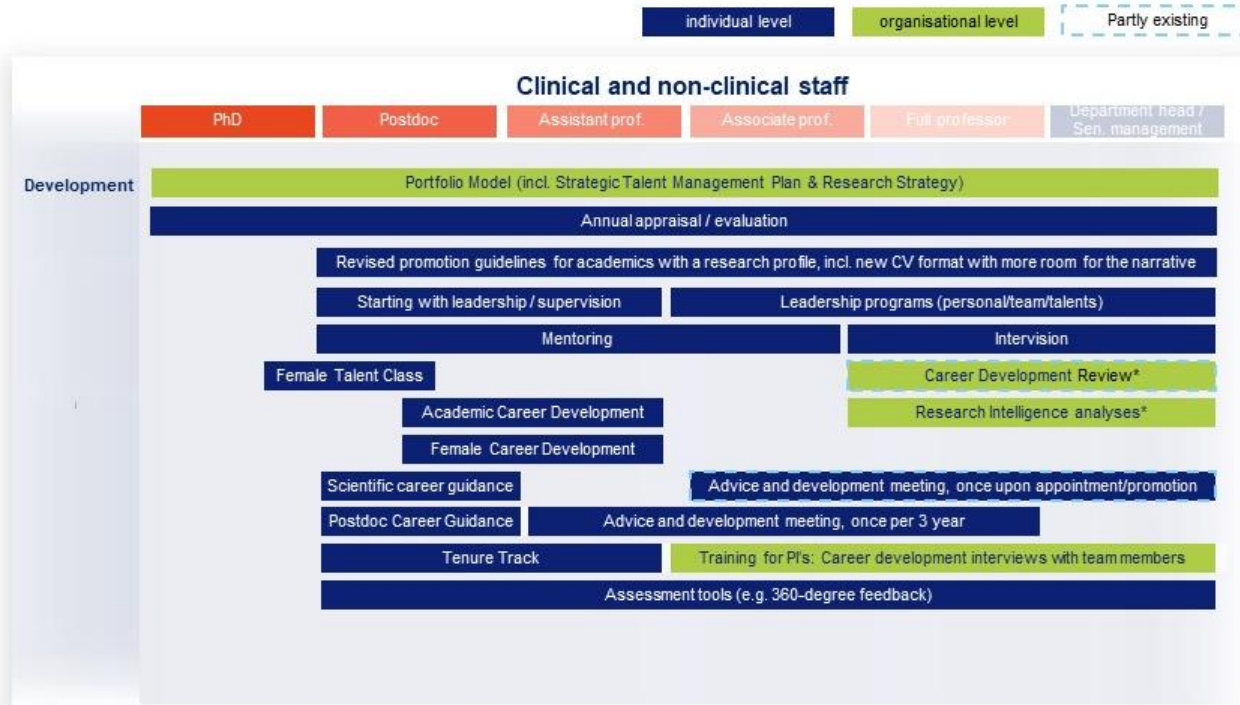
Erasmus MC endorsed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA) and joined the Coalition of Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) in October 2022. Joining CoARA signifies Erasmus MC's dedication to evaluate and enhance the criteria, instruments, and processes involved in research assessment.

In the Netherlands, the Recognition & Rewards (R&R) movement, which started in 2019, has broadened the acknowledgement and appreciation of the work of academics. This, for instance, entails diminishing the emphasis on publication metrics, while increasing focus on their involvement in various other domains, such as education, impact, leadership, and patient care. The R&R movement also advocates for the diversification and vitalization of career paths, acknowledges team performances, emphasizes the quality of work over quantitative results, stimulates open science, and encourages high-quality leadership.

Over the past couple of years, Erasmus MC has been working on refining and reforming its research assessment criteria. The image below provides a brief overview of initiatives within the Erasmus MC that are dedicated to the assessment of research(ers), both on the organizational and individual level. The details of these initiatives will be explained more in-depth in the second section below. The efforts of the Erasmus MC to refine its research assessment criteria are also interwoven with the principle of Open Science, which is key in fostering a culture of transparency. Open Science not only offers opportunities to collaborate with, contribute to, and benefit from the academic process, but it also lets academics share their (research) results more broadly with other academics, peers, and society.

This action plan is a living document which will be updated regularly. In this document we outline what the Erasmus MC is currently doing regarding the CoARA commitments, along with its plans, goals, and objectives for 2024-2027.

Initiatives within the Erasmus MC that are dedicated to the assessment and development of research(ers), both on the organizational and individual level:



* is specific (organizational) support for senior management, but with the ultimate goal to benefit all researchers from postdoc position onwards.

2. The CoARA Commitments, Erasmus MC’s Current Status, and Plans for 2024-2027

CoARA commitments:	Current status (May, 2024):	Plans for 2024-2027:
<p>1. Recognize the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research</p>	<p><u>Recognition of departments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new model for the allocation of the direct government funding (first income stream) has been implemented (portfolio model). In this new model, all Erasmus MC departments write a narrative in which they (1) describe how the research strategy of their department aligns with the Erasmus MC research strategy, (2) describe what their sustainable and impactful collaborations are, (3) describe how they implement Open Science practices, and (4) write a Strategic Talent Management Plan. This new model makes a break away from the previous model based on quantitative (perverse) parameters, such as number of professors and completed promotions. <p><u>Recognition of individuals and talent support:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The promotion guidelines for academic staff with a research profile have been revised and have been implemented on the 1st of January, 2024. In these revised guidelines, diverse backgrounds, talents, and differences between disciplines are taken into account. Care-4-Research-Talent is a pilot at Erasmus MC, offering events, trainings and tools to provide a structured approach to the support of career development of individual researchers and improved talent management at departments. Furthermore, Erasmus MC offers several programs and courses, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity & Inclusion program: Unconscious Bias, Intercultural Communication, and Navigating High Power Structures. Leadership program with training possibilities for starters and advanced leaders. Female Talent Class Female Career Development Academic Career Development 	<p><u>Recognition of departments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All departments are required to undergo the process of writing new narratives for the portfolio model again in the next two years, after which they will repeat the process every three years. Furthermore, the portfolio model will be evaluated in Q2/Q3 of 2024. <p><u>Recognition of individuals and talent support:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion guidelines for academic staff with an education profile will be revised. Started in Q4 2023, expected in Q3 of 2024. The need for other career paths will be assessed (e.g., a clinical profile etc.). This will be done in collaboration with an advisory group and Erasmus MC researchers. The need for horizontal career paths will be assessed, also for non-academic staff. If necessary, promotion guidelines for these other profiles will be developed and assessed, all while taking diversity into account. The annual performance appraisal and evaluation are currently undergoing reform. <p><u>Recognition of open science:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the upcoming years, Erasmus MC will keep stimulating and strengthening open science practices, and will keep developing the open science component that is part of the portfolio model. Furthermore, Erasmus MC will keep focusing on a short term implementation of the <i>Taverne agreement</i> and the institutional data repository.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scientific Career Guidance <p><u>Recognition of open science</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erasmus MC encourages departments and individuals to contribute to and make use of open science practices. On the departmental level, this is done through the allocation of the first income stream as described above. On the individual level, Erasmus MC offers help and guidance for researchers on, for instance, open access publishing, FAIR data, and writing a data management plan. 	
<p>2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On January 1st, 2024, a new CV format was introduced which leaves more room for the narrative rather than solely focusing on quantitative indicators. Furthermore, in this new CV format, academics have ample room to describe their involvement in and contributions to peer-review activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Q2/Q3 of 2024, a calibration session for the committee for the promotion of academic staff will be organized, ensuring that both qualitative and quantitative indicators are responsibly assessed. • In the upcoming years, Erasmus MC will organize several training sessions to accommodate qualitative evaluation mechanisms, as well as organizing training sessions based around peer-review. • Criteria to assess the quality of applicants of internal grants will be revised. Training and guidance for committees will be in place. • As of now, Erasmus MC is not planning on actively using research-on-research practices, though this might be subject to change in the future.
<p>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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JIF and h-index are no longer used in the promotion for academic staff. • JIF and h-index are no longer used in the allocation of internal grants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the upcoming years, we would like to focus on responsibly using quantitative indicators to support qualitative assessment.
<p>4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organizations in research assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erasmus MC has a critical stance towards rankings does not provide information and/or data for (international) rankings • Rankings are not used in research(er) assessment 	<p>No further steps required</p>
<p>5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organizational changes committed to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erasmus MC is dedicating 2 FTE (until April 2025) personnel to implement the Recognition & Rewards program within the Erasmus MC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the future, the Erasmus MC aims to allocate certain resources to organize meetings, activities, and gatherings in

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals participating in working groups, advisory groups, and other organizational bodies (e.g., Talent & Innovation Council, Research Development Office Research Policy and Advice Office, etc.) demonstrate a commitment to reforming research assessment through their voluntary contributions, extending beyond the allocated FTE resources. 	<p>order to promote organizational and cultural changes related to reforming research assessment.</p>
<p>6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The promotion guidelines for academic staff with a research profile have been revised and have been implemented on the 1st of January, 2024. In these revised guidelines, diverse backgrounds, talents, and differences between disciplines are taken into account. The Erasmus MC has simultaneously introduced a new CV format that leaves more room for the narrative. As part of the new model for the allocation of the first income stream (portfolio model), departments are asked to fill out a Strategic Talent Management Plan (STMP). This STMP focuses on research talent management within the respective departments, while devoting attention to diversity and inclusion policies and the respectful transition of researchers. The graduation guidelines for PhD candidates have been revised. These new guidelines allow for transparency and prioritize quality over quantity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are currently working on revising the promotion guidelines for academics with an educational profile, and we are exploring the need for other career paths within the Erasmus MC. The annual performance appraisal and evaluation are currently undergoing reform.
<p>7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness is raised through communication to academics (e.g., communication via email from the dean to all heads of departments, video announcement by the dean, communication via Intranet, Q&A sessions etc.). Committees are informed of changes in research assessment through information sessions and calibration sessions. Awareness for Open Science is raised through the yearly Open and Responsible Science award, which aims to recognize projects that include open, transparent, inclusive and responsible Open Science practices. When it comes to external funding schemes, Erasmus MC offers several trainings and workshops for academics on personal grants and the use of narrative based CV's. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the upcoming years, Erasmus MC wants to raise awareness by organizing several meetings, such as lunch meetings and panel discussions centered around research assessment and assessment criteria (e.g., responsible use of metrics).

<p>8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erasmus MC is part of the CoARA Working Group “Supporting the alignment of research assessment systems with CoARA in biomedical disciplines through administrative reforms and governance”. • Good practices are exchanged with other universities (UNL), university medical centers (NFU), and other institutes in the Netherlands through regular meetings and an internet forum (RRview). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The option of joining other CoARA working groups in the future will be explored. • In the upcoming years, good practices will be shared within the Erasmus MC.
<p>9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the principles and implementation of the Commitments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the Erasmus MC, intranet pages are used to communicate progress and changes regarding the reform of research assessment with Erasmus MC staff. • The Dean of the Erasmus MC communicates changes and/or progress made through, for instance, letters and pre-recorded video messages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, the public website of the Erasmus MC does not feature any relevant information on this topic. Going forward, the aim is to utilize this platform more.
<p>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</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2026-2027, Erasmus MC will focus on evaluating the implemented changes. In order to do so, best practices, and possibly research-on-research, will be used to determine how these evaluations should be done.