

CoARA Action Plan 2023–2027

1. Organisation	Karelia University of Applied Sciences (Karelia)
2. Responsible person(s):	Anne Ilvonen, Research and Development Director, anne.ilvonen@karelia.fi Jaana Tolkki, HR Manager, jaana.tolkki@karelia.fi
3. Official member of Karelia UAS in CoARA National Chapter Finland	Anne Ilvonen, Research and Development Director, anne.ilvonen@karelia.fi

Accepted by: Karelia University of Applied Sciences Management Group 14.5.2024.

Contents

- 1** **Commitments of CoARA**

- 2** **Objectives**
 - 2.1 CoARA Action Plan goals of Karelia University of Applied Sciences
 - 2.2 Networks

- 3** **Universities of Applied Sciences – special characteristics**
 - 3.1 Karelia University of Applied Sciences (Karelia UAS)

- 4** **Current situation**
 - 4.1 Responsible research assessment – Qualitative evaluation of research/RDI projects
 - 4.2 Responsible researcher assessment – Qualitative evaluation of RDI personnel and applicants

- 5** **Work packages**
 - 5.1 Objectives and roadmap for assessment reform, years 2024 – 2027 (Karelia UAS)

1 Commitments of CoARA

The Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment:

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.
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.

2 Objectives

The reform of research and researcher evaluation, aligned with the CoARA commitment, presents an opportunity for Karelia University of Applied Sciences (Karelia UAS) to enhance the quality, responsibility, and transparency of its research, development, and innovation (RDI) activities. Karelia UAS wants to be recognized as an employer that values diverse research careers, fosters various career paths, and supports researchers in their career development.

Although the research and researcher evaluations at Karelia UAS are already heavily based on qualitative evaluation, these practices continue to be assessed and further developed through collaboration with Finnish and European universities.

2.1 CoARA Action Plan goals of Karelia University of Applied Sciences

Karelia University of Applied Sciences aims to:

1. Improve the qualitative evaluation of RDI activities.
2. Improve the qualitative evaluation of the competence of personnel engaged in RDI activities.
3. Regularly conduct evaluations and development activities as an integral part of Karelia UAS's organisational processes, as well as share and gain good practises through networking, collaboration and knowledge sharing within Karelia UAS and among the CoARA signatories.

During the 4-year CoARA implementation period, assessment practices across all three levels will be evaluated and updated, where necessary, in accordance with Karelia

UAS's quality management system. Development will follow Karelia's standard quality processes, which are based on the Deming Cycle for continuous improvement (Plan, Do, Check, Act).

2.2 Networks

Karelia UAS's participation in the European CoARA working group **Towards an Inclusive Evaluation of Research (TIER)** reflects a commitment to promoting inclusive research practice evaluations. The aim of the working group is to support the promotion and consideration of gender equality, multidisciplinary approaches, and diversity within research evaluation. The group produces good practices, training materials, and organises international workshops. The thematic group is led by the University of Milan-Bicocca (UNIMIB).

Furthermore, Karelia UAS is a member of the CoARA National Chapter Finland, which is led by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies. The mission of this group is to support the entire Finnish research community in its pursuit of a quality focused assessment culture that recognises the full diversity and impact of academic work. Additionally, cooperation is also carried out between other Finnish universities of applied sciences.

3 Universities of Applied Sciences – special characteristics

The main challenges inherent in the CoARA process arise from the academic research tradition, which heavily relies on bibliometric indicators for research evaluation and research merit. In Finnish universities of applied sciences, RDI activities are grounded in applied research, the utilization of research outcomes, and development work. Consequently, this approach differs from the traditional research practices of universities.

Universities of applied sciences are also multidisciplinary development organisations. Their focus lies in carrying out concrete development activities across various fields. Therefore, when evaluating RDI activities, a qualitative approach is naturally emphasised, along with impact assessment.

Additionally, recruitment processes within universities of applied sciences are characterised by openness and rely partly on qualitative evaluation, excluding qualifications.

3.1 Karelia University of Applied Sciences (Karelia UAS)

Karelia University of Applied Sciences operates in seven study fields, offering 18 programmes, including six master-level studies. The study fields encompass health care and social studies, business, engineering, forestry, media, and hospitality management. Karelia UAS is a significant and well-recognised operator in education and plays a key role in the regional RDI activities. Karelia UAS operates actively in various national and international networks.

Karelia University of Applied Sciences combines its RDI activities, and they all are integrated with the following:

- study fields of Karelia UAS
- strategic choices of Karelia UAS
- challenges identified in the society and the environment

Karelia's RDI activities are organised into five project portfolios, each containing specific projects:

- Experts for the work life of tomorrow
- Education-based immigration and internationalisation
- Sustainable well-being
- Intelligent production and services
- Solutions for the green transition

These strategic choices and project portfolios serve as guiding principles for RDI activities, as well as for the multidisciplinary research groups associated with them. RDI activities are funded through various project funding instruments. Notably, regional development funding is particularly emphasised in Karelia's RDI funding. Furthermore, there are fewer research projects compared to development projects, and approximately 20% of all projects are international RDI projects.

4 Current situation

4.1 Responsible research assessment – Qualitative evaluation of research/RDI projects

At Karelia University of Applied Sciences, research (RDI) is evaluated at various levels:

- strategic level
- project portfolios
- individual RDI projects

At Karelia UAS, ‘research activities’ encompass all research and development projects (RDI activities). The evaluation of RDI activities is carried out as part of the UAS strategy evaluation, within project portfolios, and throughout the project life cycles.

As an organisation, Karelia UAS undergoes continuous evaluation by authorities and RDI funding bodies. The quality and operations of the UAS are subject to external evaluation every six years, conducted by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC). Karelia UAS’s most recent external audit was carried out in 2023.

4.2 Responsible researcher assessment – Qualitative evaluation of RDI personnel and applicants

Karelia UAS employs several staff groups. These staff groups include teaching staff, RDI staff, and administrative staff. RDI staff includes project managers, project researchers, project specialists, project coordinators, and project workers. Lecturers, as part of their teaching positions, contribute to research and development. Principal lecturers engage in various research and development duties, such as publishing, contributing as senior

experts in RDI projects, and participating in curriculum development. Lecturers and teachers also perform diverse research and development tasks, including designing and implementing in-service trainings and specialist services.

Karelia UAS has defined 25 strategic competences that are implemented, continuously developed, and monitored within Karelia's strategic Human Resource Development (HRD) plan. These strategic competences align with Karelia's strategic choices in research, development, and innovation.

Annually, the strategic competences are evaluated in individual development discussions between employees and their supervisors. During these discussions, strategic competences are evaluated based on self-assessment. Additionally, development of competences and competence needs are assessed in these discussions.

In addition to individual development discussions, researcher assessment is conducted during the recruitment process.

Karelia UAS adheres to recruitment principles, with a particular focus on responsibility throughout the recruitment process:

- Recruitment serves as a key tool for increasing intellectual capital, especially in alignment with strategic choices related to research personnel.
- Each year, Karelia UAS develops a recruitment plan that outlines the recruitment needs and requests for the upcoming calendar year. All recruitments are guided by the Karelia 2030 strategy and strategic choices.
- Open vacancies are extensively advertised through social media channels, the Karelia UAS website, intranet, staff newsletters, and communication channels with alumni and partners.
- Job announcements provide descriptions of the competences required for each position.

- Recruitment policies are defined in the process description for human resources recruitment. Additionally, a digital pre-task is always part of the recruitment process.

The recruitment practices comply with the national legislation on non-discrimination and gender equality. During the recruitment process, the interview group recognises, and values competences and experiences acquired outside the traditional academic sphere.

The salary for each position is determined based on the actual demand level of the position, in accordance with collective agreements. In RDI positions, the duty-specific salary considers the complexity of the tasks, work performance, and experience supplements. These categories, along with their evaluation criteria, are openly available to the staff members.

The Career Management Program is part of Karelia's strategic Human Resource Development plan. Career management is about managing individuals at each stage of their career. The aim of career management is to support an employee's own career management and skills development, which will assist him or her in coping with career demands and changes. Succession planning is Karelia's human resource management tool to prepare for skills gaps and plan for potential career transitions within the organisation. Succession planning identifies key people in the organisation and their potential replacements. Furthermore, succession planning also assesses the horizontal and vertical career paths of the staff in Karelia UAS.

5 Work packages

WP0. Development of Karelia UAS's CoARA Action Plan, resource allocation

T1 – Plan preparation, resources

T2 – Roadmap for the future

The objectives of this work package are to allocate resources to complete the Action Plan and all the actions listed in it. Karelia UAS will identify responsible persons for each WP and task and agree on the division of labour. The aim is also to create a roadmap for tasks in Action Plan.

WP1. Communication and training at Karelia UAS

T1 – Meetings

T2 – Dissemination

Karelia UAS will organise meetings with its own staff at the university of applied sciences and with CoARA networks. Karelia UAS is a participant in the European CoARA working group TIER – Towards an Inclusive Evaluation of Research. The focus of the working group is to promote the evaluation of inclusive research. The aim of the working group is to support the promotion and consideration of gender equality, multidisciplinary activities, and diversity as components of research evaluation. The group will produce good practices and training materials and organise international workshops on the theme. The thematic group is led by the University of Milan-Bicocca (UNIMIB).

Moreover, Karelia UAS is also member of the CoARA National Chapter Finland, which is led by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies. The mission of the group is to support the entire Finnish research community in its progressions towards a quality-focused assessment culture that acknowledges the full diversity and impact of academic work.

Karelia UAS will update the Code of Conduct, incorporating the CoARA principles, to be publicly available.

WP2. Evaluation and documentation of internal research and researcher evaluation processes, criteria, and tools at Karelia UAS

T1 – Research proposal evaluation

T2 – RDI project evaluation

T3 – Research group/Thematic evaluation/RDI portfolios

T4 – Researcher evaluation

Karelia UAS will document the internal processes related to RDI evaluation and reporting at the project, team, and organisational levels. In addition, Karelia UAS will document practices related to researcher evaluation, including recruitment and competence management. Additionally, the researcher evaluation in the recruitment process will be expanded with narrative CVs, and tools for researcher evaluation in the context of career path planning will be created.

WP3. Identification of potential areas for development in Karelia UAS's assessment processes and decisions on which issues are most important to renew in line with the CoARA principles

T1 – Analysis – Research assessment

T2 – Analysis – Researcher assessment

T3 – Interventions

All collected data will be analysed, and development challenges will be identified. The primary challenges will be selected for intervention. Between one and three challenges will be chosen for piloting, which will undergo testing and development in the initial phase of development.

The key areas relevant in the researcher evaluation process will be identified to further develop researcher evaluation related to performance at work and personnel development, especially in PhD career path planning.

WP4. Development, piloting, and application of new assessment practices, dissemination (WP4)

T1 – Pilots – Research assessment

T2 – Pilots – Researcher assessment

T3 – Dissemination, improving practices

Each pilot will undergo evaluation, and decisions will be made regarding whether the novel process will be integrated into Karelia's internal routines as is, or if it requires further development.

The necessary revised criteria, tools, and processes will be implemented. The implementation of these elements will be monitored as part of the standard quality management process.

WP5. Participation in national and European CoARA development work

T1 – National Chapter

T2 – International working group

T3 – Finnish UAS network

Karelia UAS will actively participate in national and international cooperation in the development of CoARA processes.

5.1 Objectives and roadmap for assessment reform, years 2024 – 2027 (Karelia UAS)

Objectives (WPs) and targets (T)	2024	2025	2026	2027
Development of Karelia UAS's CoARA Action Plan, resource allocation T1 – Plan preparation, resources T2 – Roadmap for the future				
Communication and training at Karelia UAS (WP1) T1 – Meetings T2 – Dissemination				
Evaluation and documentation of internal research and researcher evaluation processes, criteria, and tools at Karelia UAS (WP2) T1 – Research proposal evaluation T2 – RDI project evaluation T3 – Research group/Thematic evaluation/RDI portfolios T4 – Researcher evaluation				
Identification of potential areas for development in Karelia UAS's assessment processes and decisions on which issues are most important to renew in line with the CoARA principles (WP3) T1 – Analysis – Research assessment T2 – Analysis – Researcher assessment T3 – Interventions				
Development, piloting, and application of new assessment practices, dissemination (WP4) T1 – Pilots – Research assessment T2 – Pilots – Researcher assessment T3 – Dissemination, improving practices				
Participation in national and European CoARA development work (WP5) T1 – National Chapter T2 – International working group (TIER) T3 – Finnish UAS network				