COARA Action Plan University of Urbino

UniUrb Roadmap
to the Reform of Research Assessment

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UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI URBINO
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1. Introduction

In November 2022, the University of Urbino Carlo Bo (UniUrb) formally signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA), pledging to implement the Core Commitments and Supporting Commitments outlined by the Agreement.

As a signatory of the Agreement ARRA, UniUrb joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) composed of other European research Institutions, to enable systemic reform based on common principles within an agreed timeframe, and to facilitate exchanges of information and mutual learning between all those willing to improve research assessment practices.

In 2023 UniUrb joined the CoARA Italian National Chapter, led by the CNR and the University of Bologna, aiming at assisting the Italian CoARA members in implementing the commitments.

In the context of the Italian National Chapter, UniUrb is participating in the activities of the **WP1: Coordination, engagement, and expansion of the National Chapter**, and, in particular, **Task 1.2: Institutional Roadmap alignment**.

The task 1.2 is dedicated to aligning the Italian CoARA members in the definition and updating their institutional Roadmap.

UniUrb started to translate the commitments into "internal milestones and actions" by appointing the "**Reforming Research Assessment Committee**" whose main aim is to coordinate and support the reform process based on the approach outlined by "The SCOPE Framework: A five-stage process for evaluating research responsibly".

The Committee is structured into two subgroups:

1. The Research Assessment **Policy Committee**, which is responsible for coordinating and overseeing the internal reform process;

2. the **Working Group** for Responsible Research Assessment, which is responsible for designing the Action Plan to be approved by the Academic Bodies.

In addition to the contribution in terms of human resources dedicated to the reform of research assessment, UniUrb foreseen a budget to implement some actions outlined in the Action Plan in accordance with the Supporting Commitment no. 5 "*Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to*".

2. Context and state of art

The University of Urbino Carlo Bo (UniUrb) recognises its status as a **multidisciplinary university**, where STEM sciences, social sciences, and humanities coexist, as a **core value**: it recognises the importance of the variety of its scientific disciplines, of the different research types (e.g. basic research *vs* applied research) and of the diversity of the research approaches (ex. interdisciplinary approach) available in its academic community [see PSA 2024-26 page 7].

This vision aligns with the Principles and Commitments outlined by the **Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA)**, signed by UniUrb in 2022, as well as with the general principles and requirements of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, which UniUrb is committed to implement after being granted with the "**HR Excellence in Research award**" in 2024.

UniUrb promotes a **research culture** based on quality, integrity, transparency, knowledge-sharing, societal and economic impact, ethics, and inclusiveness, considering them as **key elements** of its mission and vision.

Indeed, UniUrb embedded these principles into its Strategic Plan:

- o to maximise **the quality of research**, to develop and design new responsible research assessment criteria and processes, primarily based on qualitative evaluation;

- o to align its HR practices with those of the European Charter and a Code (i.e., Human Research Strategy for Researchers - HRS4R) in order to **attract and retain talented researchers**;

- o to contribute the stimulating and **favourable work environment** for researchers at all career stages;

- o to foster UniUrb **national** and **international dimension** in order to establish new partnerships, to expand and strengthen its networks, and to facilitate researchers' **international mobility**;

- o to promote and reward the ability to attract **research funds and projects**.

Consistently with its HRS4R (Action Plan) and the strategic goals, UniUrb identifies the following ARRA **Core Commitments** as **priorities**:

1. Recognise the diversity of research 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

since they have an impact on the processes/criteria for assessing both research outputs and researchers (ex. career progressions/recruitment).

Moreover, to facilitate mutual learning, communicate progress and ensure that new approaches are evidence informed, UniUrb endorses **all the Supporting Commitments**, also playing an active role in the Italian National Chapter and the CoARA Coalition.

In the process of advancing research assessment reform, UniUrb identified the following key challenges to fill the gaps which are currently impeding the full implementation of the ARRA Commitments:

- o **Internal key challenges:**

  1) selective procedures for recruitment/career progressions are mostly based on quantitative indicators;

  2) lack of clear guidelines to progressively switch from quantitative based to qualitative evaluation of research informed by publication metrics;

  3) there is a limited awareness about the importance of switching from a publication metrics approach to a qualitative approach that could favour the development of UniUrb according to its strategic vision

  4) there is still a limited explicit adoption of Open Science Practices that can boost the quality of the scientific outputs;

  5) the internal research assessment system only partially recognises the plurality and the diversity of research contributions (Input: Gap Analysis EU Charter&Code);

  6) limited low number of interdisciplinary research outputs;

- **External key challenges** *(for which UniUrb doesn't have the power/authority to address due to the national legislation/regulation currently impeding full implementation)*:
  - National Scientific Qualification (i.e., ASN) mostly adopt author-based metrics (e.g., counting papers, patents, citations, grants, etc.) to evaluate quality and/or impact;
  - Alignment of National Law and National Research Assessment System with ARRA, also through the engagement of MUR and ANVUR in CoARA.
  - At present National Scientific Qualification (i.e., ASN) does not recognise the interruptions/diverse paths in the research career as potentially valuable.

3. Action Plan with defined milestones

In its effort to fulfil the commitments outlined by the Agreement, UniUrb has developed the following Action Plan to be implemented within the timeline established in the ARRA.

Selected ARRA Core Commitments	Milestones	Actions	Consistency with the other ARRA Core Commitments and the Supporting Commitments (*) (if applicable)	Timeline (2024-2027) *Status* (in progress, to be planned)	Consistency with Strategic Plan 2024-2026 (Thematic Heading and Strategic goal ID)
1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research	Value diverse research activities, outputs, and impacts, since the very beginning of the career	Dedicate specific support to favour the application for funding opportunities dedicated to early-stage career researchers	Supporting Commitment no. 8	2024 (in progress)	Research R.4 - R.5
		Reward researchers who apply to international competitive calls for proposals even though not funded, but evaluated as excellent (e.g., *Seal of Excellence*)	Supporting Commitment no. 5	2025 (to be planned)	Research R.5
		Dedicate specific budget to promote the cooperation between young researchers and actors beyond academia	Supporting Commitment no. 8	2025 (to be planned)	Third Mission/Societal Impact TM.3
		Reward researchers' impacts, establishing the Award for "Impact in Research @UniUrb"	Supporting Commitment no. 5	2026 (to be planned)	Third Mission/Societal Impact TM.1 - TM.4
		UniUrb Post-Doc Award for young researchers that produced high quality publications	Supporting Commitment no. 5	2027 (to be planned)	Research R.1
	Engage academic community in recognising the diversity of contributions	Strengthen synergy between administrative and academic staff in relation to new legislation, university policies and strategies on research (continuous update) by organising regular information seminars held by administrative staff in	Supporting Commitment no. 7	2024 (in progress)	Community, inclusiveness, organisation, sustainability CIOS.4

		favour of Ph.D students, post-docs, researchers and professors to increase an awareness about the different research approaches and methods, as well as the main outcomes expected by national and international authorities			
		Disseminate among researchers the best practices in research diversity recognition, by joining the CoARA events/meetings and by Erasmus+ Staff mobilities	Supporting Commitments no. 7 and 8	2024 (in progress)	Research R.1
		Provide researchers with training on Open Science to encourage them to think broadly about the diversity and plurality of outputs that arise from their research	Supporting Commitment no. 7	2024 (in progress)	Research R.1
		Host conferences and seminars on Open Science principles and practices	Supporting Commitment no. 7 and 8	2024 (in progress)	Research R.1
	Value interdisciplinary in research activities	Reforming the organisation of laboratories and research facilities to favour the sharing of expertise, knowledge and different research approaches to boost interdisciplinary in research activities	Supporting Commitment no. 8	2024 (in progress)	Research R.1
2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators	Focus on quality in research assessment, recruitment and career progressions	Explore the possibility to better align open call positions to ARRA principles	Supporting Commitments no. 6 and 7	2025 (to be planned)	Research
		Promote quality recruitment by providing judging commissions with guidelines that define qualitative criteria to favour recruitments in line with the UniUrb's strategic development Provide guidance and support to panels and committee, defining "Guidelines for Responsible Research Assessment"	Supporting Commitments no. 6 and 7	2025 (to be planned)	Research R.4
		Align application forms to qualitative principles embraced by the UniUrb	Supporting Commitments no. 6 and 7	2025 (to be planned)	Research R.4

		Provide guidelines and templates for Narrative CVs, in line with ARRA principles and the HRS4R[1]	Supporting Commitment no. 6	2025 (to be planned)	Research R.1 - R.3 - R.4
		Pilot an internal system to monitor the quality of recruitments		2026 (to be planned)	Research R.4
		Favour career advancement for researchers capable of attracting prestigious grants from competitive and international calls for proposals	Supporting Commitments no. 6	2024 (in progress)	Research R.4 - R.5
		Provide additional funds for researchers conducting high-quality research, to be used for team building, funding of research activities, payment of publication fees, etc., to ensure long-term research and to retain talented scholars	Supporting Commitment no. 5	2025 (to be planned)	Research R.4 – R.5
		Increase researchers' awareness about the importance of describing each authors' responsibility and contribution in their final research outputs (ex. CRediT and/or using the institutional Repository - IRIS - Contributor Roles Taxonomy)	Supporting Commitments no. 7	2024 (in progress)	Research R.1
		Implement the Institutional Research Repository (IRIS-ORA) public landing page to highlight the "excellent" publications according to the institutional "Excellence set of criteria"	Supporting Commitment no. 6	2025 (to be planned)	Research R.1
	Progressive transition to research assessment based primarily on peer review	Consider the principles of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) in research assessment procedures	Core Commitment no. 3 and Supporting Commitment no. 6	2025 (to be planned)	Research R.1
		Pilot new peer review models in cooperation with other universities, already partnering in networks (i.e., HAMU), starting from selected disciplines	Core Commitment no. 3 and Supporting Commitment no. 6	2024 (in progress)	Research R.1
		Pilot diverse indicators (ex. CRediT, ORCID, etc) and metrics (ex. PlumX, etc) that can possibly capture quality and impact to support research evaluation	Core Commitment no. 3 and Supporting Commitment no. 6	2024 (to be planned)	Research R.1

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[1] Narrative CVs will gain researchers the opportunity to describe their key achievements in research, and why they are important; moreover, researchers can provide evidence of their specific contribution to each research output, describe their competencies, their mobility experiences (international, inter-sectoral, etc) and their career path(s)

(*) Supporting Commitments:

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

4. Implementation

The components of Research Committee responsible for Research Quality Assurance at departmental level (i.e. RAQ-RD) will oversee/manage the implementation of the actions, and report at least once every two months to the Research Committee and the relevant Academic bodies that are in charge of the monitoring of this Road Map.