



Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

**COALITION FOR ADVANCING
RESEARCH ASSESSMENT (COARA)**

ACTION PLAN 2023-2028

Introduction

The Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) was established in January 2022, and initiated a process for drafting an agreement for advancing research assessment processes. Collaborative and collective discussions informed an agreement, which sets out a shared direction for changes in assessment processes for research and researchers. Swansea University is committed to advancing research assessment and creating a culture of open, responsible and inclusive research and research assessment. Our Vice-Chancellor Professor Paul Boyle is a member of the CoARA Steering Group.

We have been signatories for the Concordat for Researchers since its inception and signed the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA) in 2018. These are embedded the principles within our Research and Innovation Strategy (2020-2025). Our approach to support for the research ecosystem, we are recognised by the Science Council for our Technician Commitment (TC), submitted in 2022 and our TC action plan (submitted and approved in 2023).

In November 2022, Swansea University joined CoARA as a signatory. In March 2024, we were delighted that Swansea was announced as a co-lead for the UK Chapter of the CoARA with Strathclyde and Loughborough Universities and we look forward to hosting a future event at Swansea in June 2024.

In 2022 Swansea University began an extensive review of its Academic Career Pathways (ACPs) and Research Assessment. A key plank of this review has been to look at the use of metrics in the appointment, development and promotion process. The outcome of this review, which will be implemented from 2024, has been to make a number of key enhancements to our use of research assessment practices for research and innovation promotion pathways. The research criteria used in the new career pathways are closely aligned with the four modules of the UKRI Resumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI). Previously the career pathways included a number of Indicative Performance Levels associated with research, innovation, education and the student experience. We have removed the indicators from the promotion process and recognised this may have limited recognition of the diverse practices, activities and careers in research. In doing so, we have acknowledged that quantitative assessment using a narrow range of indicators focussed on a limited definition of success, does not capture the diversity of research activity at Swansea, or the value researchers may add to peers, research groups or wider society.

In December 2021 we appointed our first Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research Culture, Professor Biagio Lucini, with his successor, Professor Ian Mabbett taking up the role from April 1st 2024. The DPVC is supported by the university's Research Culture Manager, Dr Anna Seager. The University has developed a RC Action and Implementation plan which is aligned with the CoARA principles and aimed at enhancing our research culture.

The following Action Plan details our current state of assessment and our proposed actions, based on the assessment position in 2024.

Principles and Commitments Action Plan

Commitments	Actions	Timescales for activity launch
<p>1 Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research.</p>	<p>1.1 Adopt a UKRI R4RI style CV amendment to ACPs, including four themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions to the generation of new ideas, tools, methodologies or knowledge • The development of others and maintenance of effective working relationships • Contributions to the wider research and innovation community • Contributions to broader research/innovation-users and audiences and towards wider societal benefit also recognising research within collegiality and management to recognise responsible assessment of research, removing narrowly focussed KPIs that reward narrow career progression. 	Ongoing
	<p>1.2 Progress the Technician Commitment Action Plan, with support of University People and Culture Committee (accepted in 2023) and supporting Technical Career development.</p>	Ongoing
	<p>1.3 Support contribution to and participation by our Technicians in the Wales Innovation Network Technicians' Network.</p>	2024
	<p>1.4 Review the biannual Research and Innovation Awards planned for June 2024 for diversity of recognition.</p>	2024
	<p>1.5 Launch an Impact Fellowships scheme to support staff to plan and develop the impact of their research.</p>	2024
<p>2 Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.</p>	<p>2.1 Faculty Research Excellence Officers and the University Research Quality Enhancement team provide training sessions on peer review of diverse outputs led by disciplinary experts.</p>	Ongoing
	<p>2.2 Recognise mentoring, coaching, research outputs and pre-bid peer review within the leadership and management component of ACP assessments.</p>	2024
	<p>2.3 Recognise contributions to researcher development within the leadership and management component of ACP assessments.</p>	2024
	<p>2.4 Develop and/or deliver training to increase recognition of open research and its value.</p>	2025
	<p>2.5 Encourage, monitor and support the University's Open Research policies through recognition within ACP assessments.</p>	2025

Commitments	Actions	Timescales for activity launch
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.	3.1 Provide guidance notes for applicants and external reviewers that reject inappropriate metrics for promotions.	2024
	3.2 Develop a responsible research assessment policy to reduce the use of Journal Impact Factors and h-index.	Ongoing
	3.3 Ensure unconscious bias training is available to all assessors of research and researchers.	2024
4 Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment.	4.1 Provide guidance for referees, external assessors and appointment panels (within revised ACP guidance) to explain highlight such rankings are not a 'fair and rand that responsible' assessment of research the criteria these rankings use should not trickle down to the evaluation of individual researchers.	2024
5 Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to.	5.1 Continue to provide support to coordinate the research and innovation staff working group, and to engage those being assessed with the development of the assessment process.	2024
	5.2 Continue with our commitment with the support of the People and Culture Committee to review and update our Academic Career Pathways.	2024
	5.3 Ensure alignment with our Equalities Action plan and include impact assessment for proposed change.	2024
	5.4 Enable and support the establishment of pilot promotions panels to evaluate revised ACP criteria.	2024
	5.5 Complete an evaluation of the implementation of ACP aligned to the UKRI Joint Users Group (JFG)/ Alternative Users Group (AUG) shared evaluation framework.	2025
	5.6 Act on feedback from each annual review to enhance and embed the new ACP process successfully.	Ongoing
	5.7 Provide training and guidance on ACP reform to researchers at all career stages, and to promotion panels.	2024

Commitments	Actions	Timescales for activity launch
6 Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes.	6.1 Faculty Research Excellence Officers and the University Research Quality Enhancement team provide training sessions on peer review of diverse outputs and impacts led by disciplinary experts.	Ongoing
	6.2 Establish a Canvas-based series of resources that support qualitative assessment of diverse research outputs and impacts.	2024
	6.3 Provide guidance on Open Research practices and the benefits of Open research to all research assessors, research staff and students.	2025
	6.4 Develop and/or deliver training to increase recognition of open research and its value.	2025
	6.5 Revise ACPs to include recognition of trajectory, and hence future potential, alongside track record.	2024
	6.6 In applications for promotion consider requesting from researchers a portfolio of the applicant's choice of evidence for achieving their research goals within an appropriate framework.	2024
7 Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use.	7.1 Communicate changes in assessments through academic career pathways to all staff who will be assessed and who will undertake assessments.	Ongoing
	7.2 Establish a Canvas-based series of resources that support qualitative assessment of diverse research outputs and impacts.	2024

Commitments	Actions	Timescales for activity launch
8 Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition.	8.1 Join the National Chapter of CoARA and participate fully in sharing of best practise in research assessments.	2024
	8.2 Explore the potential for exchanging practices and experiences of research assessment with other Universities e.g. UNITE partners through our Strategic Partnership with University Grenoble Alpes.	Ongoing
	8.3 Participate in exchange and sharing of experiences with other Universities in Wales, through the Wales Innovation Network Research Culture team.	2024
	8.4 Contribute to UUK and UKRI networks on career pathways and research assessment reform.	2024
	8.5 As UKRN member, develop a Case Study for dissemination on policies and approaches to improve recognition of Open Research practices.	2025
9 Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments.	9.1 Publish CoARA Action Plan on University and CoARA webpages.	2024
	9.2 Share with staff changes to ACP aligned with CoARA.	2024
	9.3 Complete an evaluation of the implementation of ACP aligned to the UKRI Joint Users Group (JFG)/ Alternative Users Group (AUG) shared evaluation framework.	2025
	9.4 Act on feedback from each annual review to enhance and embed the new ACP process successfully.	Ongoing
	9.5 Communicate progress made on CoARA action plan via ACP assessment reform.	2025
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.	10.1 Contribute to Open Research 4 Case Study project through UKRN and evaluate our progress on research assessment of open research practices.	2025
	10.2 Adopt UKRI work on research assessment – shared evaluation framework to evaluate implementation of revised ACP assessment.	2025
	10.3 Evaluate the development of Impact Fellowship scheme for inclusivity on the diversity of participation.	2025



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