

Berlin University Alliance Collaboration Platform CoARA Action Plan

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Contact:

Dr. Sybille Hinze

Center for Open and Responsible Research,

Objective – Advancing Research Quality and Value

Berlin University Alliance

Kleine Präsidentenstraße 1

10178 Berlin

Email: sybille.hinze@berlin-university-alliance.de

Preamble

The Berlin University Alliance Collaboration Platform (BUA Collaboration Platform) joined the Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) in April 2023. By joining CoARA, the BUA Collaboration Platform commits itself to reviewing the criteria, instruments and processes of research assessment, aiming to implement practices that ensure that diverse types of research outputs, practices and activities as well as different career paths, personal circumstances and framework conditions are taken into account when assessing the quality and impact of research.

The BUA Collaboration Platform, legally set up as a joint public corporation, is the management unit of the Berlin University Alliance, which is the Alliance of the Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin and Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin (BUA partners). The four partners joined forces to overcome institutional and disciplinary boundaries in order to create an integrated research environment and to turn Berlin into one of the world's leading research hubs. The Berlin University Alliance is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the State of Berlin as part of the Excellence Strategy of the federal and state governments.

While the Collaboration Platform does not perform research on its own, it coordinates, supports and facilitates activities within and across the BUA partner organizations, i.e., its main functions are:

- supporting excellent researchers beyond institutional boundaries and
- sharing resources and providing new joint services

within the Alliance. The Berlin University Alliance pursues these tasks along five Objectives (Focusing on Grand Challenges, Fostering Knowledge Exchange, Advancing Research Quality and Value, Promoting Talent and Sharing Resources) and 3 Cross Cutting Themes (Diversity and Gender Equality, Teaching and Learning and Internationalization).

The subjects of the BUA's evaluation processes are therefore in particular the selection procedures for projects and individuals to be funded by the BUA as well as their performance monitoring and evaluation during and after the funding. Decisions regarding the assessment processes within the BUA partners are and remain within their autonomy. Yet, the vision and overarching aim of the Alliance is to turn Berlin into an integrated research environment by facilitating research collaboration, career development and knowledge exchange across the traditional boundaries of personal networks, institutions and disciplines. Consequently, assessment processes should be based on a shared understanding of values, compatible processes, procedures, and criteria. The BUA Collaboration Platform facilitates their formation and contributes to creating a common understanding and orientation on current developments and principles of research assessment.

In its effort to fulfill the commitments outlined in this Agreement, the BUA Collaboration Platform has developed the following action plan to guide its activities related to research assessment.

Commitment	Scope	Action	Responsibility	Time Frame
1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research	a) Internal BUA Collaboration Platform (BUA ColPf) processes, i.e., measure and project selection, monitoring and assessment	Review selection, monitoring and assessment processes and criteria in place. Identify and implement selection, monitoring and assessment processes and criteria to accommodate diversity of and within BUA activities.	BUA management (overall), Center for Open and responsible Research (CORE) in collaboration with BUA Quality Management Unit (QMU) (operational)	Status: Ongoing Review of existing guidelines / SOPs to be finalized by end 2024 Draft for adjusted / new processes and criteria by mid-2025 Continuous reflection in the context of new selection processes and annual review
	b) With relevance for BUA partner organizations	While decisions regarding the assessment processes and criteria applied within the BUA partners are within their autonomy, BUA ColPf contributes to develop a shared understanding of values, compatible processes, procedures, and criteria (see commitment 5).	BUA Objective 3 (Advancing Research Quality and Value)	Status: Ongoing, to be continued for the term of BUA Value)
2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators	a) Internal BUA ColPf processes, i.e., measure and project selection, monitoring and assessment	BUA ColPf project selection processes have been based on peer review from the beginning and will continue to do so. Quantitative indicators are used very selectively. Still, guidelines and SOPs outlining the selection, monitoring and assessment principles will be reviewed	BUA management (overall) Center for Open and responsible Research (CORE) in collaboration with BUA Quality Management Unit (QMU) (operational)	Status: Ongoing Review to be finalized by end 2024 Draft for new guidelines / SOPs by mid-2025 Continuous reflection in the context of new assessment and selection processes and annual review

	b) With relevance for BUA partner organizations	and revised (where needed) in line with the principle. Implementing guidelines and SOPs will be complemented by building up knowledge and skills about peer review processes.	BUA Objective 3 (Advancing Research Quality and Value)	Concept for trainings on peer review by end 2024
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	a) Internal BUA ColPf processes, i.e., measure and project selection, monitoring and assessment	Within BUA funding lines provision of publication-based metrics (JiF and / or h-index) is not required, these indices are not considered in selection processes. Still, to clarify refraining from using these indicators, guidelines and SOPs will be reviewed, revised and communicated.	BUA management (overall) Center for Open and responsible Research (COrE) in collaboration with BUA Quality Management Unit (QMU) (operational)	Status: Ongoing Review to be finalized by end 2024 Draft for adjusted / new processes and criteria by mid-2025 Continuous reflection in the context of new assessment and selection processes and annual review Status: Ongoing, to be continued for the term of BUA
	b) With relevance for BUA partner organizations	While the decision on assessment processes performed within the BUA partners remain within their autonomy, the BUA contributes to continuously engaging with relevant stakeholders within BUA organizations and beyond in order to advocate responsible use of adequate indicators. In particular, COrE engages in provision of education of	COrE	

		training about adequate use of quantitative indicators in particular as an active member of the Consortium running the European Summer School for Scientometrics (esss) which provides training and state-of the art scientometric methods, procedures, indicators.		
4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment	<p>a) Internal BUA ColPf processes</p> <p>b) With relevance for BUA partner organizations</p>	<p>BUA ColPf itself is not a research organization and thus, rankings are not relevant at this level.</p> <p>BUA continuously engages with all stakeholders within BUA organizations and beyond, in particular by offering training about adequate use of quantitative indicators (see also above engagement in esss).</p>	CORe	Status: Ongoing, to be continued for the term of BUA
5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organizational changes committed to		For BUA, ensuring research quality is both an institutional goal and a field of research. While developing assessment processes performed within the BUA partners remain within their autonomy, BUA supports projects and activities that fur-	BUA Objective 3	Status: Ongoing, to be continued for the term of BUA

	<p>a) Internal BUA ColPf processes</p> <p>b) With relevance for BUA partner organizations</p>	<p>ther develop existing scientific expertise on relevant aspects of scientific performance, research quality and their assessment leading to adapt procedures implemented by the BUA ad their partner organizations.</p> <p>Establishment of organizational unit and structures focusing on research monitoring and assessment.</p> <p>Provision of support measures with relevance for organization-specific reform initiatives.</p>		<p>Status: Relevant units (CORe and QMU) established and operational, ongoing, to be continued for the term of BUA</p> <p>Status: Ongoing, to be continued for the term of BUA</p>
<p>6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes</p>	<p>a) Internal BUA ColPf processes & b) With relevance for BUA partner organizations</p>	<p>Advocating transparent, appropriate and progressive evaluation of individual researchers and research teams in line with international initiatives is part of the recently released BUA mission statement on Open Science. In addition, as stated above (commitment 5) BUA supports projects and activities to develop scientific expertise on relevant aspects of scientific performance, research quality and</p>	<p>BUA Objective 3</p>	<p>Status: Ongoing, to be continued for the term of BUA</p>

		their assessment which will be taken into account when adapting procedures within the BUA partner organizations. However, decisions regarding assessment processes performed within the BUA partners remain within their autonomy.		
7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use		Continuously engage within and beyond BUA with the scientific community and discusses the need for and the effects of responsible research assessment. Consult with the units in charge of project selection about processes in place and criteria applied. Use existing and set up new communication channels to inform about processes and criteria applied, e.g., use BUA Newsletter and develop dedicated webpage. Implement relevant content in educational and training modules, e.g., the BUA-module Research Quality and Open Science.	CORe & QMU	Status: Ongoing, to be continued for the term of BUA
8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition		Share knowledge and experiences among the BUA partners in an organized manner, actively contribute to	CORe	Status: Ongoing, to be continued for the term of BUA

		CoARA, e.g., in relevant working group(s) and the National Chapter Germany.		
9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and Implementation of the Commitments		Communicate the state of play of changes and their implementation of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment, i.e., report regularly to the BUA governing bodies (Bord of Directors, Executive Board), BUA Management, Steering Committees, Management Units. Facilitate exchange with stakeholders in the house responsible for engaging with the CoARA commitments and use the communication of the progress as a guiding example. Inform the broader scientific community (BUA partner organizations and beyond) through dedicated webpage and BUA Newsletter.	CORe	Status: Ongoing, to be continued for the term of BUA, launch website by end of 2024
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		For BUA, ensuring research quality is both an institutional goal and a field of research. BUA supports projects and activities that further develop existing scientific expertise on relevant	CORe	Status: Ongoing, to be continued for the term of BUA

		aspects of scientific performance, research quality and their assessment leading to adapt procedures implemented by the BUA partner organizations. Make research results publicly available – funding provided from BUA already requests OA publishing of research results.		
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