



JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY  
IN KRAKÓW



## **Jagiellonian University Action Plan for Responsible Research Assessment**

### **Preamble:**

The Jagiellonian University (JU), founded in 1364, is the oldest higher education institution in Poland and one of the oldest in Europe. It consists of 16 faculties encompassing Technical and Engineering Sciences, Medicine and Health Sciences, Exact and Natural Sciences, Humanities, and Social Sciences. The university employs almost 9000 academic and professional staff, and the number of students exceeds 37000, including more than 1500 PhD students. Since 2018 JU is a member of the European University Alliance Una Europa, currently consisting of 11 European research-oriented universities. Participation of JU in a number of university networks like EUA, The Guild, Coimbra Group and many others allows for a wide information and know-how exchange, covering all the fields of academic life.

The Jagiellonian University develops as a research-intensive university, conducting cutting-edge studies financed by numerous national, European and international grants. These include both fundamental and applied research conducted jointly with companies. The comprehensive nature of university activities and its societal impact means that many aspects of the research assessment reform become relevant.

### **Current status**

The Jagiellonian University is a signatory of the Agreement and a member of CoARA. From the beginning, the Jagiellonian University has been strongly involved in promoting the principles of the reform and initiating actions at the national level: backed by the Koszalin University of Technology, it coordinates the activities of the Polish National Chapter.

In 2019 the Jagiellonian University developed new procedures for the periodic evaluation of researchers and academics. They are available (in Polish) as Rector's Ordinance No. 113 of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019 at <https://bip.uj.edu.pl/dokumenty/zarzadzenia-rektora>. Also in 2019 the procedure for conducting competitions for scientific and didactic positions was set out in the university Statute. The templates for application are available (in Polish and in English) on the website of the HR Center <https://www.cso.uj.edu.pl> and on the webpages of individual Faculties. Finally, the Jagiellonian University developed the rules of employment and remuneration for persons participating in the implementation of projects financed from external

sources. Documents are available on the website of the HR Center and of the Research Support Center [https://cwn.uj.edu.pl/en\\_GB](https://cwn.uj.edu.pl/en_GB). For the past 15 years a yearly reporting of individual researchers' scientific achievements has been conducted at every Faculty, with specific elements adjusted to the disciplines. That tool has been introduced to help the scientists to continuously monitor their individual development, and allows the authorities to reward the best and motivate less active ones.

Despite the establishment of these procedures, many of which are consistent with the Agreement, there is still much room for improvement. The University regularly gathers feedback from its academic community on evaluation criteria and employment conditions to identify the challenges that need to be addressed. An example is an anonymous survey conducted last year, directed to all employees engaged in research, which included questions on the evaluation of various aspects of employment and research, as well as providing the possibility of freely indicating problematic areas. From the survey it occurred that the most highly rated were ethics and professionalism, while the objections or insufficient information claims were raised in relation to recruitment procedures and available career paths. Consultations with the academic community also indicated the need to refine the periodic evaluation criteria to better reflect the diversity of research achievements, promote scientific and intersectoral collaboration, and be even tighter tailored to the specificities of different disciplines (or match interdisciplinary endeavors).

Responses to the identified shortcomings should be progressively introduced in the course of implementation of the research assessment reform, leading to upgrading of the employment policy and career path possibilities of the researchers, including also improvement of the criteria and schemes of periodic assessments. The JU Action Plan 2024-2027 proposes a way to address those key challenges.

Implementation of the CoARA Action Plan at the Jagiellonian University will formally start in Autumn 2024, and will be reviewed and updated annually. In the list of aims and actions we refer to the commitments as they are ordered in the CoARA Agreement – core (K1-K4) and supporting (S1-S6) ones.

## **Overarching Goal:**

In the Action Plan, the Jagiellonian University focuses on the assessment of research activities of the academic staff. It should be, however, understood as a fraction of the complex assessment system, encompassing all sectors of the academic roles and duties. The overarching goal of the planned actions is to promote ambitious and sustainable research. This requires **a transition from mainly quantitative to more qualitative evaluation criteria and a departure from the paradigm based on implementing successive short-term grants**. This will constitute **a fundamental change in the prevailing research culture**.

Such a reform will not be effective without ensuring compliance with legal regulations and consistency with the criteria for evaluating research performing organization used (and planned to be introduced) in Poland. Therefore, the Jagiellonian University will also participate in discussions at the national level regarding the reform of central assessment of the research institutions. Ensuring compliance of the recommended principles with the current law is an indispensable condition to effectively implement the reform at the university level.

## **Focus on:**

Reforming the research activity evaluation system and moving to qualitative criteria is a difficult challenge that engages resources and may lead to results that are not always predictable. Therefore, it is planned to **carry out pilot actions** and, based on their outcomes, assess the usefulness of the proposed strategy for the Jagiellonian University as a whole. The criteria and procedures will be tested in situations where proper assessment of researchers is crucial: in competitions for the employment of research group leaders and in promotion processes. If such an approach proves effective, it will be introduced as a general principle. These steps should lead to introducing a tool for every employee to help assess and shape individual development paths, supervised by research leaders and strategically directed by the university management.

As an important complement to the research activities assessment reform, the **Researcher Employment Support Program** will be introduced, with two threads: i) offering a bridge funding for researchers employed on short-term contracts financed by research grants; ii) opening a tenure track pathway for the most talented scientists. Participation in these programs will be based on the assessment of researchers in accordance with qualitative criteria and upgraded procedures. The availability of the program should result in an increased awareness and acceptance of the reform among the academic community.

Simultaneously, the **periodic evaluation system will be reviewed and adjusted** to ensure alignment with the goals of the reform and to serve as an additional tool promoting quality and impact of research. Additionally, changes to institutional regulations will be proposed to **increase the flexibility of career paths** within the university. In particular, formal restrictions on researchers' involvement in teaching activities will be relaxed, especially in research-led education, as well as in student and doctoral supervision and mentoring.

It is also important to establish rules that facilitate **two-way employment exchanges** between academia and industry, particularly to enable the permanent or temporary return to the university of the researchers working outside it for an extended period. This shift directly entails moving away from treating publications as the sole (or most important) criterion for evaluating researchers in the recruitment procedures, towards valuing diverse professional experiences like product development or commercialization.

## **Specific Aims and Actions:**

### **Aim 1: Reflection on the current assessment strategies and approaches to the reform**

#### **Actions:**

1.1. Undertaking a comparative review of periodic assessment policies across all university faculties, with a focus on verifying how well they promote high-quality research and consider diverse aspects of professional activity. An additional goal is to track the distribution over the years of the resulting evaluation labels and assess how these labels influence promotion opportunities and employment conditions.

1.2. Benchmarking of current and planned practices related to the researcher's qualitative assessment criteria with peer revision among CoARA members and beyond. This will form a basis for analyzing possibilities of implementing the best of them at the Jagiellonian University.

1.3. Conducting a comparative analysis of different approaches to researcher assessment currently used in Polish institutions to investigate if changes in research quality over the last years correlate with the institutional policy of promoting potential research group leaders and development of their skills. This should provide a basis for making informed decisions on how to support cutting edge research at the Jagiellonian University.

**Deliverables:**

- Information available on the University websites for all researchers regarding the alignment of the periodic assessments with CoARA commitments and career development opportunities.
- Benchmarking summary available to Polish National Chapter members.
- Results and conclusions of the comparative analysis of institutional policies available to Polish National Chapter members (first) and beyond.

**Compliance with the commitment:** K2, S1, S2, S4, S6

**Time frame:** 2024-2025

**Aim 2: Developing rules for hiring and promotion of researchers and academic teachers, recognizing the diversity of academic tasks**

**Actions:**

2.1. Appointment of a multidisciplinary working group for responsible research assessment at the Jagiellonian University. This team will also be involved in CoARA activities undertaken by the Polish National Chapter and within the Coalition as such.

2.2. Developing a framework set of criteria that can be taken into account when assessing candidates and researchers, based on qualitative principles and narrative CVs. The set will be used as a guide by committees and will also provide guidance for scientists on how to prepare a description of achievements.

2.3. Establishing the desired profiles of researchers at stages R1-R4, recognizing diversity of research outputs and specificities of disciplines. In particular, they should encourage collaboration with partners outside the university, including the provision of research services that do not lead to the publication of results. The proposed career path models will be a guide for committees assessing hiring or promotion of applications. They will also be taken into account when selecting the criteria used in the periodic evaluations of researchers.

2.4. Developing a draft of university-wide regulations that will allow researchers to supervise students and doctoral candidates based on their academic competencies rather than the type of position they hold. In practice, this will increase the flexibility of professional development paths.

**Deliverables:**

- A framework set of criteria and guidelines for preparing a narrative CV available on the University websites.
- Description of the desired (generic) profiles of researchers at various stages of their career available on the University websites.
- Implementing regulations that facilitate the inclusion of researchers in research-led education and their involvement in collaboration with companies, regardless of the type of position they hold. Additionally, at the national level, through the National Chapter, a request will be formulated to the research funding agencies to reduce formal restrictions on professional activity for researchers whose salaries are paid from external grants.

**Compliance with the commitment:** K1-4, S1, S2, S5

**Time frame:** 2024-2026

**Aim 3: Developing rules for composing evaluation panels which engage external experts**

**Actions:**

3.1. Establishing the rules for selecting and inviting external experts and developing framework principles for organizing evaluation panels or commissions, taking into account specificities of disciplines. The rules will be created with the participation of representatives of different Faculties.

3.2. Introduction of the principle that the employment of leaders of new research groups is based on the assessment by panels with the participation of several external experts. Peer-revision is the standard for quality assessment, but it is bias-sensitive. To minimize the risk, it is necessary to obtain several opinions from independent external reviewers. This requires workload and funds, so it should be used first for the most meaningful decisions (employment of the group leaders, establishing the tenure positions). Once the procedures have been successfully tested, this type of assessment can be further expanded. It is worth emphasizing that in some university units such rules have been (partially) applied for years, the aim is to develop and disseminate them, adopting to the specific conditions, customs and cultures.

**Deliverables:**

- Description of the established rules for selecting and inviting external experts available on the university websites.

**Compliance with the commitment:** K1-3, S1, S2, S5, S6

**Time frame:** 2025-2027

**Aim 4: Introducing the Researcher Employment Support Program**

**Actions:**

4.1. Proposing and implementing a bridge support for scientists employed on a short-term basis. Many principal investigators at the Jagiellonian University are employed on short-term

contracts with funds available as a result of success in winning highly competitive own research grants. Members of research teams are employed in a similar way. Any interruption in the availability of grant funding (unsuccessful application or late date of the next competition) results in the need to leave the university and discontinue research. For the university this often means a loss of valuable scientists and destabilization of teams. It is therefore planned to create a support system for selected candidates, with bridge financing covering employment costs for a certain period, enabling the beneficiaries to apply for and obtain another grant. Eligibility for the program will be based on a qualitative assessment of researcher achievements carried out in accordance with the principles of the reform.

4.2. Proposing and implementing the Tenure Track option for the most talented researchers. The system of self-employment of principal investigators solely from short-term own grants causes a lack of professional stability, what significantly reduces the attractiveness of a scientific career and discourages to conduct long-term high risk/high gain research. It is planned to create opportunities for the most talented scientists, who have proven the ability to conduct valuable research, to enter tenure track, i.e. professional stabilization. Eligibility for the program will be based on a qualitative assessment of the researcher's achievements, carried out in accordance with the principles of the reform by a panel with the participation of external experts.

**Deliverables:**

- Dedication of funds for the bridge funding.
- Bridge support regulations and application forms available on the university websites.
- Tenure track procedures and application forms available on the university websites.
- Dissemination of the successful solutions to the academic community.

**Compliance with the commitment:** K1-4, S1-6

**Time frame:** 2025-2027

**Aim 5: Involvement of the academic community in the process of change**

**Actions:**

5.1. Involving representatives of all Faculties in developing the desired profiles of researchers at stages R1-R4 and establishing the evaluation criteria and procedures. As a rule, it is planned to include all stakeholders interested in research evaluation, including doctoral students, researchers (also those employed from their own grants), technicians and professional staff supporting researchers. To this end, open seminars to facilitate internal discussions as well as other forms of wide intra-university information exchange will be organized.

5.2. Enhancing dialog between the university authorities and researchers: establishing regular consultations (e.g. once a year) with principal investigators implementing high-budget grants on the transition towards research culture that promotes cutting edge research at the JU.

5.3. Organizing internal information meetings, webinars and workshops aimed at promotion of the principles of the research assessment reform among the academic community. Partners from

the Polish National Chapter and Una Europa universities will be invited to exchange expertise and elaborate coherent approaches.

**Deliverables:**

- Important information related to the research assessment reform included in newsletters sent to the academic community.
- Series of open seminars dedicated to presentation and discussion of the academic assessment reform.
- Information dissemination channels and/or platforms specific to disciplines/Faculties.

**Compliance with the commitment:** S1, S3-S6

**Time frame:** 2024-2027