Coaliton for Advancing Research Assessment

Action Plan 2024-2027

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

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Introduction

In December2019 the publication of the position paper 'Room for everyone's talent' of Universities of the Netherlands (UNL), the Netherlands Federation of University Medical Centres (NFU), the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts & Sciences (KNAW), the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and Care Research Netherlands (ZonMW) marked the start of the Recognition & Rewards (R&R) program. The objective of this program as mentioned in the roadmap is to:

- introduce greater differentiation and mobility into career pathways;
- shift focus away from quantitative elements and towards the quality of the work;
- acknowledge both the individual qualities and ambitions of academics and their contributions toward shared goals;
- encourage quality leadership;
- and stimulate open science.

These ambitions were translated into a vision document for Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Since 2022 we are busy implementing this R&R vison.

In 2022 Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA) and joined the Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) to actively support the goals of this international reform movement which overlaps substantially with R&R. Through our Recognition & Rewards program in combination with the national research evaluation procedures in the Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP 2012-2027) and our Open Science programme we felt we were already well underway. By signing, our university shows commitment to continuing our efforts and further improving in these areas. This current action plan serves to contribute to, and promote the international reform agenda. It embeds existing practice and further actions which should ensure that the various forms of outputs, practices and activities maximise the quality and impact of our research.

This action plan is a living document that will be updated regularly.

Commitment	Current status	Objectives and actions 2024 – 2027
1. **Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research**	This is one of the pillars of the Recognition & Rewards program. The frameworks for new academic career paths were established by the Executive Board in July 2023. In these, we have revised the academic career paths from Assistant Professor to Associate and Full Professor.

In self-evaluation reports in the context of the national Strategy Evaluation Protocol for public research organisations, research units are free to show their diversity in contributions (e.g. software, data sets, editorships, monographs, contributions to society etc).

We practice the principles of open science, by making scientific outputs (e.g., publications, data, software, educational materials) and the processes that led to them findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable (FAIR), and foster collaborations within academia as well as with societal partners. There is more attention for involving societal stakeholders in the research process (citizen science, transdisciplinary research, public-private partnerships) and for engaging in a dialogue with society through science communication.
We move away from focusing solely on the quantity of research outputs, and give more emphasis to the quality of the scientific and social contribution of our work. | 1a. Our nine faculties are busy implementing these career paths according to the university guideline. At the end of 2024 they will have developed faculty specific career paths. From 2025 onwards, all scientists will agree in their annual appraisal on which core domain they want to focus for a certain period of time.
1b. Evaluation of career paths is addressed in the planning and control cycle via the annual plan and annual reports and discussed in the administrative consultative meeting. At the beginning of 2026, we will take stock of the state of affairs and determine the follow-up.

1c. The university is developing a reflection tool for the personal academic career path.

1d. The university is implementing Open Science through a university-wide programme, that facilitates the necessary requirements for Open Science practices in the domains research, education and impact/ engagement:
- *infrastructure and tooling* (e.g. data management tooling, platforms for citizen science)
- *support & training* (e.g. software and data skills, open educational resources)
- *community engagement* (e.g. community events around research data, open hardware, science communication)
- *recognition & rewards* (e.g. rewarding open practices, see also 2b)
- *policy* (e.g. on Open Access publications, research data management, open educational resources) |

	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam participates in OpenScienceNL.	
2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators	This is implemented at the level of research institutes through the Strategy Evaluation Protocol. At the level of individual academics we have developed and are using an assessment portfolio. Our Research Intelligence team provides innovative, responsible quantitative indicators based on open research information.	2a. More qualitative assessment criteria for academic staff are used in a personal assessment portfolio 2b. Formulate guidelines for responsible use of metrics. In collaboration with faculty implementation teams, the Research Intelligence team, the Open Science team and the Current Research Information System (CRIS) officers are creating a road map for registration of responsible metrics in the VU CRIS.
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	At the level of research institutes this is implemented through the Strategy Evaluation Protocol. At the level of individual academics we have developed and are using an assessment portfolio. Procedures for funding from the Dutch Research Council NWO prohibit the use of JIF and H-Index. There we work with evidence-based CV's. At the level of individual academics these metrics are no longer used in promotion of academic staff and not used in allocation of internal grants.	Monitoring and evaluation See also 2b. Formulate guidelines for responsible use of metrics
4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam does not use global university rankings in its assessment of research. We take a critical stance towards them and work actively together with other Dutch universities to bring about a change in culture regarding these rankings	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam engages with other Dutch universities and our international network (e.g. Aurora network) on responsible use of, and communication about international rankings.

	as reported in the recommendation paper "Ranking the university". Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam signed the More Than Our Rank initiative in December 2023 and put a disclaimer on our webpage about rankings where we also refer to CoARA.	
5. **Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to**	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is committed to the R&R program 2022-2026. There is a program leader and budget for implementation at strategic level at the VU. Academic staff was involved in defining the new career paths and assessment procedures.	The implementation of the academic career paths will take several years. In addition, the focus will increasingly be on open science, leadership and teamwork over the next years (2024-2026). Further integration of R&R in various programs within VU Amsterdam will be realized in the next 2 years (2024-2026).
6. **Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes**	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam was an early signatory of the Barcelona declaration on open research information and is committed to making open research information the norm. In analyses of the impact of research we make use of OpenAlex and OpenAire. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is involved in the CoARA working group OI4RRA on this subject.	6a. Monitor and review Strategy Evaluation Protocol. 6b. Develop ways to advance and for assessing team science. 6c. Continue participation in the CoARA working group on Open Infrastructures for Responsible Research Assessment (OI4RRA). 6d. Application for funding for a CoARA project to co-create tools and criteria for evaluations on diversity and equity. 6e. Evaluate the new assessment criteria.
7. **Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use**	Communication around our R&R program and results. VU started a MS Teams community R&R.	7a. Training for heads of department about academic careerpaths and building successful teams Q4 2024. 7b. Developing guideline documents 'Toolbox academic careers' for scientists as well as for managers Q4 2024. 7c. Outreach activities to notify staff of CoARA.

8.	Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition	This is done in regular (online) meetings and a yearly national Recognition & Rewards festival. In 2023 already the third R&R festival was held. A national online community platform RRview has also been developed. A group on this platform is dedicated to CoARA.	8a. Communicate about, and participate in, Recognition & Rewards events. 8b. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam will host a colleague of Palacky University who will spend two days to see how research assessment is organized at our university. 8c. Participate in the National Chapter on assessment reform. 8d. Exchange practices and ideas on the national online community platform RRview.
9.	Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments	Communicate about results and participate in national Recognition & Rewards events Exchange practices and ideas on the online community platform RRview and the university's MS Teams site.	Updates on our website Recognition and Rewards - Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (vu.nl), newsletters, workshops, MS Teams.
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	Evaluation is done through the 'Cultuurbarometer', research on research culture at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. In our expertise center Research Integrity and Open Science (RIOS) research practices are being evaluated. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam also hosts the Netherlands Research Integrity Network (NRIN) that practices research on research and facilitates worldwide collaboration, exchange and mutual learning on research integrity.	10a. Share this CoARA action plan on Zenodo. 10b. Communicate about the 'Cultuurbarometer'-results. 10c. Monitoring R&R results. 10d. Exchange practices and ideas on the online community platform RRview.