



CoARA

Action Plan

2024-2027

Scuola Normale Superiore



**SCUOLA
NORMALE
SUPERIORE**

CoARA Action Plan SNS
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Introduction

The Scuola Normale Superiore (SNS), established at the behest of Napoleon on October 18th, 1810, is a university institute of higher education, research and high-level training with a special status endowed with legal personality and autonomy by Article 233 of Royal Decree No. 1592 of 1933.

It promotes culture, teaching and research in the disciplines of the humanities, mathematics and the physical, natural, political and social sciences, and the exploration of their interconnections. Since its founding, it has focused its mission on the joint and synergistic development of education and research, which support each other: the SNS engages its students in research activities from the beginning of their university career.

At the SNS the ratio between lecturers and students is extremely virtuous, hovering at around 1:4. This makes the university a community of people where lecturers, researchers and students live side by side in a unique environment, carrying out teaching and laboratory activities, developing through sharing and organising events open to the public and experimental initiatives.

The research activities at the SNS (predominantly fundamental research), conducted by a small number of structured professors and researchers supported by research staff and graduate students and making use of the instrumentation at the research centres and laboratories, are characterised by a policy of breaking down disciplinary barriers and of proposing, managing and developing large projects on European and national scale, with significant results.

The value of the basic research carried out at the SNS is recognised at both national and international level; since 2019 – in accordance with the Strategic Plan 2019-2024 – the SNS has adopted policies and practices of open science in order to encourage open access to publications and to disseminate the best practices of data management in line with FAIR principles, to increase the visibility and the social impact of the research output and to lend more transparency, efficiency and collaboration to the processes of the production, validation, dissemination and evaluation of research.

In November 2022, the SNS signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA), joining the Coalition for Advancing of Research Evaluation (CoARA) and later the Italian National Chapter, a network of 50 Italian organisations, including ANVUR, which intends to promote and to implement the CoARA principles.

By joining CoARA, the SNS is committed to

- promoting research assessment practices based on methodological rigour, reproducibility and integrity as well as qualitative judgement, for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators;
- enhancing the quality and impact of research through transparent research processes and methodologies, through early knowledge and sharing of research data, allowing for the systematic re-use of results;
- rewarding research behaviour strengthening open science practices such as early knowledge and data sharing as well as open collaboration within science and collaboration with societal actors;
- ensuring gender equality, equal opportunities and inclusiveness;
- implementing actions to increase the cultural change and the awareness of the current research assessment reform.

Guiding principles

The SNS recognizes the first two core commitments of the ARRA as guiding principles in its approach to reform:

1. recognizing the diversity of contributions made to research and the related career paths based on the needs and nature of the research itself;
2. basing research evaluation primarily on qualitative criteria, both by assigning a central role to peer review and through the responsible use of quantitative indicators.

The SNS also considers the following supporting commitments of ARRA important:

5. allocation of resources to achieve the expected organisational changes;

6. reviewing and development of research assessment criteria, tools and processes;
7. provision of transparent guidance and training on assessment criteria among all actors;
8. exchange of information on practices and experiences to foster mutual learning within and outside the Coalition;
9. regular updates on the progress made on the implementation of commitments within the SNS community and the Coalition;
10. making data that can be used for research on research available to evaluate whether assessment practices and criteria achieve the desired goals.

Regarding the first CoARA core commitment, the SNS has been working and will continue to work to implement practices that contribute to increasing the robustness, openness and transparency of research, focusing on the development of open science, one of the strategic goals of the [SNS 2019-2024 Development Program Plan](#). In particular, the SNS will approve a Policy for research data management, set up a monitoring system for the different dimensions of open science, sign the *Barcelona declaration on open research information*¹ and continue to provide specific open science training for PhD students.

Concerning the second core commitment, the SNS intends to focus on evaluation based on qualitative criteria, assigning a central role to peer review, and on the responsible use of quantitative indicators for the distribution of internal resources dedicated to research, *i.e.* the budget for the recruitment of post-doctoral positions², and for the recruiting of Tenure Track Researchers (TTR, RTD-B). In the first case, it would be possible to update the internal regulation of the post-doctoral recruitment on the basis of CoARA commitments and to approve guidelines for recruitment committees to avoid focussing only on bibliometric indicators; in the second case, because of the national laws (see above, “Key challenges to address”) it would only be possible to draft guidelines for recruitment committees, raising awareness of research assessment reform and assessment criteria within the SNS community.

¹ <https://barcelona-declaration.org/>; <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10958522>; https://barcelona-declaration.org/downloads/barcelonadeclaration_italiano.pdf.

² The SNS allocates internal funds for Law 240/2010 one-year post-doctoral fellowships within a defined research project and for two-year post-doctoral fellowships in the context of a programme of several years' duration submitted by the applicants in SNS scientific fields.

Involvement of the SNS community in the change process

The actions of the plan herein were proposed by the Vice Rector for Research and Research Assessment and had been shared with the SNS Academic Departments and the Committee for Open Access, which promotes within the SNS open access to research outputs and responsible research data management, before the approval of the Academic Governing Bodies in the form of the Action Plan 2024-2027.

The defined Action Plan will be shared with the entire SNS community through publication on the institutional website and on Zenodo in the SNS community, as well as with the organisations involved in CoARA through the Italian National Chapter initiatives and publication on the Zenodo CoARA community.

The community will be involved in the change process, monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan (in consultation with the Vice Rector for Research and Research Assessment and the Committee for Open Access) and publishing periodical reports.

Key challenges to address

The main challenges to be addressed concern the national context, in particular the periodic Research Quality Assessment (VQR) and the academic staff recruitment requirements (ASN), and the national recruitment laws (Law 240/2010, DM 344/2011), which also provide journal- and publication- based metrics to assess the quality and impact of the research outputs. However, the SNS will consider setting up guidelines for the evaluation committees to avoid focussing only on bibliometric indicators in research assessment.

There are also internal challenges, such as a limited awareness of the importance of switching from a publication metrics approach to a qualitative approach, the resistance to the adoption of open science practices that boost the quality of the scientific outputs and a limited awareness of the plurality and diversity of research outputs.

Operational action plan

Short term actions	CoARA commitments	Time frame	Responsibility	Indicators
Dissemination of CoARA principles within the SNS community	5, 7	last trimester 2024	Vice Rector for Research and Research assessment Research Assessment and Open Science Service	1 public event: Annual conference of the Associazione Italiana per la promozione della Scienza Aperta (AISA) at the SNS
Participation in National Chapter task forces and CoARA Working Groups	8, 9	ongoing	Vice Rector for Research and Research assessment Research Assessment and Open Science Service	1 formal participation in one WG (TIER - Toward an Inclusive Evaluation of Research) and 1 formal participation in one NC task force (TF 1.2)

Mid & long term actions	CoARA commitments	Time frame	Responsibility	Indicators
Creation of a webpage on the institutional website to collect the main CoARA documents, the Action Plan and the related updates.	7, 9	2025	Research Assessment and Open Science Service	Online publication of the webpage dedicated to CoARA
Approval of the Policy for research data management	1, 5	2025	Vice Rector for Research and Research assessment Committee for Open Access Research Assessment and Open Science Service	On/off

Mid & long term actions	CoARA commitments	Time frame	Responsibility	Indicators
Evaluation based on qualitative criteria for the distribution of internal resources (<i>i.e.</i> recruitment of post-doctoral positions)	1, 2, 5, 6, 7	from 2025	Vice Rector for Research and Research assessment Committee for Open Access Human resources Area Research Assessment and Open Science Service	<p>Indication of the SNS subscription to CoARA in the calls for recruitment of post-doctoral positions.</p> <p>Update of the internal regulation regarding the recruitment of post-doctoral positions and the related call for recruitment: assessment of narrative/competency-based CV (following the guidelines of DORA and ERC); evaluation of diverse outputs associated with robust, open and transparent research (e.g. FAIR data sets, pre-prints, open software, open code, replication studies, registered reports etc.); submission of the project DMP with CV and research outputs to evaluate; decrease in number of outputs to submit, describing why they are important; journal- and publication-based metrics as assessment support, not as crucial indicators.</p> <p>Guidelines for recruitment committees to avoid focussing only on bibliometric indicators.</p>
Evaluation based on the responsible use of quantitative indicators in the recruitment of Tenure Track Researcher positions (TTR, RTD-B)	1, 2, 5, 6, 7	from 2026	Vice Rector for Research and Research assessment Committee for Open Access Human resources Area Research Assessment and Open Science Service	<p>Indication of the SNS subscription to CoARA in the calls for researchers recruitment.</p> <p>Guidelines for recruitment committees to stress the responsible use of bibliometric indicators.</p>

Mid & long term actions	CoARA commitments	Time frame	Responsibility	Indicators
Joining Barcelona declaration on open research information	5	from 2025	Vice Rector for Research and Research assessment Committee for Open Access Research Assessment and Open Science Service	Signing of the Barcelona declaration on open research information
Monitoring of the different dimensions of open science	10	from 2025	Vice Rector for Research and Research assessment Committee for Open Access Research Assessment and Open Science Service	1 Dashboard
Publication of the SNS CoARA Action plan on public platforms and monitoring the implementation	9	from 2025	Vice Rector for Research and Research assessment Committee for Open Access Research Assessment and Open Science Service	On/off