



**COARA ACTION PLAN 2024
TAMPERE UNIVERSITY OF
APPLIED SCIENCES**

Contents

FOREWORD	3
1 COMMITMENTS OF COARA	4
1.1 Reflection on strategy	4
1.2 Involving the community in the change process.....	5
1.3 Objectives	6
2 UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES – SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS	7
2.1 TAMK.....	7
2.2 TAMK’s RDIC model.....	8
3 CURRENT SITUATION	9
3.1 Responsible research assessment – qualitative evaluation of research and RDIC projects	9
3.2 Responsible researcher assessment – qualitative evaluation of RDIC personnel and applicants	9
4 WORK PACKAGES	11
5 ACTION PLAN SCHEDULE.....	14

FOREWORD

Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK) is one of the largest and most popular universities of applied sciences in Finland. Our strengths are multidisciplinary education, creativity, and a strong international dimension. TAMK is a higher education institution oriented towards working life and RDI cooperation.

TAMK has signed the CoARA agreement in April 2023. This action plan will determine future steps for meeting the requirements of the agreement. First chapter will present the commitments of CoARA as well as reflection on TAMK's strategy, involvement of the community and TAMK's objectives for the process. Second and third chapter will in short describe special characteristics of the Finnish universities of applied sciences and TAMK and the current situation of research and researcher assessment in TAMK. Fourth and fifth chapter outline what are the work packages and schedule to reach the goals of CoARA.

This action plan has been approved by TAMK's executive board 10.12.2024.

TAMK's list of contributors for the Action Plan	
Responsible person	Ari Sivula (Vice President, Research, Development, Innovation and Competences)
Contact person	Teemu Jokinen (Senior Adviser), teemu.jokinen@tuni.fi
Other contributors	Jutta Mäkipelkola (Senior Adviser), Markus Aho (Innovation Manager) and Anne-Maria Mäkelä (Head of External Funding)

1 COMMITMENTS OF COARA

The reform of research and researcher evaluation, aligned with the CoARA commitments, presents an opportunity for TAMK to enhance the quality, responsibility and transparency of its research, development, innovation and competences (RDIC) activities.

The agreement on reforming research assessment:

Core commitments:

1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research.
2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.
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.
4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment.

Supporting commitments:

5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to.
6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes.
7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use.
8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the coalition.
9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the principles and implementation of the commitments.
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.

1.1 Reflection on strategy

TAMK's operation is based on impact. It is achieved as a result of our basic tasks, namely education, research, development, innovation and competences (RDIC), with the support of services. It is ensured by close and multidisciplinary working life cooperation and need-based and proactive development. Impact can be seen in development of the working life and region, such as new competence, operations models and technological innovations. It is manifested in positive

changes of individuals, communities and societies both nationally and internationally. Experts and their competence, active interaction and participation in regional development are in a key role.

TAMK's strategy describes the purpose, ambition, values, critical success factors and strategic objectives of TAMK's operation. The strategy is based on the Ministry of Education and Culture's steering, Tampere Universities community's joint definitions of policy, operational environment analysis and staff's, students' and working life representatives' views.

RDIC are based on TAMK's strategy and the Tampere Universities community's research strategy. Operation is steered by annual planning objectives considering the economy and staff resources in the strategic focus areas. In accordance with TAMK's strategy, RDIC are based on the needs of working life and society. Identified competence and development needs are processed through applied research and development to new competence, business and solutions. Innovations are often created through experiments and thus TAMK encourages brave openings and experiments in all its activities.

TAMK wants to be recognized as an employer that values diverse research careers, fosters various career paths, and supports researchers in their career development. Although the research and researcher evaluations at TAMK are already heavily based on qualitative evaluation, these practices continue to be evaluated and further developed in coherence with CoARA commitments and TAMK's strategy, through collaboration with Finnish and European universities.

1.2 Involving the community in the change process

This action plan has been a common effort of different units in TAMK. We have worked together with Applied Research Center, Human Resources, Quality and Information Management and Project Management Office in a close contact with Vice President responsible for Research, Development, Innovation and Competences. More detailed action plan will be refined in the spring of the first year of the action plan 2025. A closer look will be taken into our objectives (see chapter 1.3), and we'll evaluate and define, what are the future steps to achieve our goal. Work packages (see chapter 4) has been made to define how to face the development challenges and the schedule for action plan objectives and targets (see table in chapter 5) has been formed.

Involvement as well as learning and developing together, will be the key elements in planning, evaluating and executing the procedures and practices of research assessment. Horizontal and vertical representativity is crucial and will enhance the effectivity of the change process. All relevant actors in different academic fields, levels of our organisation and career stages will be gathered to participate the different workshops, seminars etc. that we will organise in the context of CoARA. Benchlearning is a key approach on how to share good practices. We will actively use

our existing platforms of development to share information and learn together. These include annual TAMK day and TAMK conference, monthly leadership forums, etc.

1.3 Objectives

In TAMK, the key quality management principle is continuous development, PDSA-cycle (Plan, Do, Study and Learn, Act). The quality system enables knowledge-based management and includes procedures, processes and systems which TAMK uses to maintain and develop the quality of its operation. Besides TAMK's quality system as a whole, there is also a description of quality management in RDIC and in education which illustrate what PDSA means in different activities.

Operation is evaluated and developed based on feedback and follow-up data. Corrective action is taken in a need-based and customer-oriented manner as an integrated part of continuous and annual development of the higher education institution. The quality system aims at establishing an operational culture which encourages self-evaluation, continuous learning and development as well as dissemination of good practices. The quality system is evaluated regularly by participating in external audits and using internal audits as a support in the development work.

In the scope of CoARA TAMK aims to:

- Improve the qualitative evaluation of RDIC activities (see chapter 3.1 in more detail)
- Improve the qualitative evaluation of the competence of personnel engaged in RDIC activities (see chapter 3.2 in more detail)
- Regularly conduct evaluations and development activities as an integral part of TAMK's organisational processes, as well as share and gain good practices through networking, collaboration and knowledge sharing within TAMK and among the CoARA signatories, especially in the field of Finnish universities of applied sciences

During the CoARA implementation period, assessment practices across all levels will be evaluated and developed, where necessary, in accordance with TAMK's quality management system. Development will follow TAMK's standard quality processes.

2 UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES – SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS

The main challenges inherent in the CoARA process arise from the academic research tradition, which heavily relies on bibliometric indicators for research evaluation and research merit. In Finnish universities of applied sciences, RDI activities are grounded in applied research, the utilization of research outcomes, and innovation and development work. Consequently, this approach differs from the traditional research practices of universities.

Universities of applied sciences are also multidisciplinary development organisations. Their focus lies in carrying out concrete development activities across various fields. Therefore, when evaluating RDI activities, a qualitative approach is naturally emphasised, along with impact assessment. Additionally, recruitment processes within universities of applied sciences are characterised by openness and rely partly on qualitative evaluation, excluding qualifications.

2.1 TAMK

TAMK is a multidisciplinary limited company of the university of applied sciences with approximately 11 500 degree students, about 750 employees, several thousand supplementary education students, and RDIC activities with a project portfolio worth around 18 million euros and approximately 113 person-years. TAMK and Tampere University form Tampere Universities community. Together Tampere Universities is building a new model for higher education and research in Finland.

TAMK is a public body governed by special legislation and mainly operates with tax revenue, which places a special requirement to comply with the regulations of society and to promote the realisation of the will of social decision-makers. In the activities, TAMK promotes the aim of a better society and a more sustainable world as an example of high-level professional competence.

TAMK operates in five faculties, offering around 60 programmes of which 25 % are conducted in English. The study fields encompass built environment and bioeconomy, business and media, industrial engineering, pedagogical innovations and culture, social services and health care. TAMK is a significant and well-recognised operator in education and plays a key role in the regional RDIC activities. TAMK operates actively in various national and international networks.

TAMK is a member of the CoARA National Chapter Finland, which is led by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies. The mission of this group is to support the entire Finnish research community in its pursuit of a quality-focused assessment culture that recognises the full diversity

and impact of academic work. Cooperation is also carried out between other Finnish universities of applied sciences.

2.2 TAMK's RDIC model

In the current TAMK's RDIC model, applied research, development and innovation activities are performed in Applied Research Center (ARC) and in RDIC teams of five faculties with supportive expertise of Project Management Office (PMO) in RDIC funding instruments, Pre- and Postaward operations, and international networks and partnerships.

TAMK combines its RDIC activities, and they all are integrated with the following:

- study fields of TAMK,
- strategic long-term focus areas of TAMK: learning in working life and international networks, use of new technologies, ecological innovations and sociocultural challenges,
- challenges identified in green and just transition.

TAMK's RDIC activities are classified, evaluated and implemented under the following eight RDIC themes, each containing specific projects:

- innovation management,
- industrial management,
- knowledge management and data driven solutions,
- pedagogy in education, communities and organisations,
- resilience of society,
- sustainability,
- digitalization and
- creative economy.

TAMK's strategic choices and targets for project portfolios serve as guiding principles for RDIC activities, as well as for the multidisciplinary research groups associated with them. RDIC activities are funded through various project funding instruments. In development work and projects conducted, emphasis is placed on regional development and the needs of working life. EU's cohesion funds (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund) play a crucial role in regional development projects. International funding is increasing its importance. Currently around 40 % of all on-going projects are international RDIC projects plus 9 % international mobility projects. The latter support planning joint development projects in both education and RDIC.

3 CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Responsible research assessment – qualitative evaluation of research and RDIC projects

At TAMK, applied research (RDIC – research, development, innovation, competences) is evaluated at three levels:

- strategic level,
- project portfolios and
- individual RDIC projects.

At strategic level, the targets are set annually and evaluated every quarter by the management. The same applies to project portfolios for which data-based analysis is conducted based on the information (volumes, theme areas, cross-cutting projects, funding instruments and SDG focuses) retrieved from project portfolio management tool (Thinking Portfolio). Individual RDIC projects are evaluated once during their life cycle by the PMO's Postaward team and the Head of External Funding. External audits are conducted as per the requirements of the funding agencies and instruments.

To support the RDIC project teams, a learning environment covering project's whole life cycle has been set-up in the Moodle for Project Managers. This includes ia. information and guidelines about TAMK's project management processes, and quality expectations and assurance therein. The same is under process for the project proposal preparation to improve the quality and process also at that stage. Both Pre- and Postaward teams have prepared the service paths to standardize the PMO services and its quality.

As an organisation, TAMK undergoes continuous evaluation by authorities and RDIC funding bodies. The quality system and work of the universities of applied sciences are subject to external evaluation every six years, conducted by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC). TAMK's most recent external audit was carried out in 2021.

3.2 Responsible researcher assessment – qualitative evaluation of RDIC personnel and applicants

In the beginning of 2023, TAMK has formed a new Applied Research Center (ARC) that is part of the new RDIC organisation. The ARC includes Innovation Manager and TAMK's main Principal Lectures (approximately 20 persons) who were recruited to the new unit with certain criteria. Other

persons involved in research practices are mainly located in TAMK's five faculties and units that support the research projects such as PMO, Finance Department, and Communication and Societal Impact unit. In the five faculties works approximately 400 permanent lecturers whose work include research projects.

Due to this rather new organisational change TAMK will, at first, include elements of the CoARA researcher evaluation recommendations to the development of the ARC's management and assessment practices. Researchers' evaluation will be developed to comprise e.g. leadership skills (including networks) and substance knowledge (including research methods) criteria in addition to the more quantitative criteria such as number of publications and research funding. The evaluation of the new criteria is planned to cover in the yearly one-to-one discussions with the supervisor.

In TAMK, all vacancies are open also internally, thus giving all staff members the possibility to apply for new positions. TAMK will define and present growth path opportunities to staff members so that they can better recognize positions and development possibilities e.g. suitable trainings. In addition to deepened knowledge in a certain competence area, TAMK appreciates the expanding of competences to different areas. This kind of growth path is suitable for those staff members who are interested in e.g. general management positions. Additionally, staff members entry to researcher's path will be smoothed with closer cooperation with the Doctoral School of Tampere University.

TAMK is active member in the national RDI network of the universities of applied sciences. New methods and criteria for researcher assessment can be searched and planned together in the community. Common discussion and decision-making regarding the assessment practices that contribute to robustness, openness, and transparency of the research, should be promoted. TAMK is ready to adjust its own evaluation processes if common practices are decided in the future.

4 WORK PACKAGES

To reach the goal of CoARA and the objectives of the action plan, four work packages have been made. More detailed plan is made yearly after interim (spring) evaluation. The action plan schedule table divided to work packages can be found in the chapter 5.

WP1 Resource allocation, implementation of the action plan, communication and evaluation of the development process

Task 1.1 Resource allocation

In terms of resource allocation, most important thing is to allocate personnel capacity to ensure that the focus stays in the development process and in the implementation of the action plan for the whole timeframe of 3,5 years.

Task 1.2 Communication

Raising awareness and communicating the progress inside the organisation is very important for the impact of the development process. The emphasis will be on high level participation and awareness in different academic, organisational and career levels.

Task 1.3 Evaluation

Evaluation of the whole process is important to adjust the course of implementation when seen necessary. Plan is to evaluate the action plan implementation activities, awareness and the quality of communication once a year in a light manner. This evaluation will give important information concerning ia. the resource allocation and weather resources need to be increased during the implementation timeframe.

WP2 Developing qualitative evaluation methods of research and RDIC projects

Task 2.1 Evaluation

The details of this work package will be determined in close collaboration with the universities of applied sciences CoARA working group that is meeting for the first time in December 2024. In cooperation the focus of the evaluation, the development methods, pilot targets etc. will be determined. The preliminary plan is to cross evaluate the processes and procedures together and compare them with the CoARA recommendations. In the assessment, self-assessment and peer review will be used.

Task 2.2 Development

After project evaluation criteria has been evaluated in cooperation, project evaluation in different phases of the project cycle will be redesigned together in the TAMK community, especially with the experts in PMO, in coherence with developed evaluation criteria and impact of the project.

Task 2.3 Pilot

After the project evaluation criteria has been developed, piloting of the project thematical assessment will be done across unit and faculty boundaries (e.g. ARC, research groups in faculties, RDIC-themes, project portfolios, strategic focus areas).

Task 2.4 Implementation

As TAMK will participate in the national network to define common evaluation criteria, it could be beneficial to find future peer review partners for the project assessments. The details of implementation and future assessment will be determined in close collaboration with the national network.

WP3 Developing qualitative evaluation methods of RDIC personnel and applicants

Task 3.1 Evaluation

The current requirements of researchers are evaluated and compared with the CoARA recommendations. The evaluation criteria will be developed based on comparison. TAMK will study the existing competence frameworks for researchers such as European Competence Framework for Researchers and benchmark other universities in developing the suitable criteria that align with TAMK's strategic aims and selected RDIC themes. These new criteria will be applied to both internal and external candidates for researcher positions.

Task 3.2 Development

The new evaluation criteria for researchers will be created and discussed together with ARC members and launched in ARC, aligned with TAMK's choices in RDIC. After the launch, development rounds needed and acceptance by TAMK board, the criteria will be familiarized to all RDIC-related staff in all five faculties through competence discussions and workshops. The directors of the faculties are involved to the process so that in addition to the new evaluation criteria for researchers, the competences needed both in the faculty research and TAMK level RDIC theme areas are recognised. Additionally, RDIC and knowledge sharing platforms and processes between units are evaluated, redeveloped, and created to get the capabilities function.

At the same time, the process of faculty staff moving to researcher's path will be smoothed. The planned cooperation with the Doctoral School of Tampere University supports this aim.

Task 3.3 Pilot

After ARC has finalized the expectations and features of the new researcher evaluation criteria, the team level discussions will be started in all five faculties to pilot and update our researcher assessment practices, covering evaluation processes and criteria, during the CoARA implementation period.

Task 3.4 Implementation

During the project, qualitative criteria about the future competence needs are collected and after that utilized and evaluated in the one-to-one discussions with staff participating to the research projects. The new evaluation criteria for researchers will be also evaluated in one-to-one discussions with the current researchers and in the recruitment process of future researchers.

WP4 Evaluation and development of the renewed assessment procedures

It is inherent to TAMK's quality system that all the activities and procedures are systematically evaluated. Piloting new procedure, collecting feedback of the pilot and evaluating the procedure (is it fit for purpose, does it achieve desired goals etc.) is therefore very natural for TAMK.

Task 4.1 Pilots of the new procedures

After the assessment methods of research (WP2) and researchers (WP3) have been developed, it is time for the pilots. This is described in more detail in tasks 2.3 and 3.3.

Task 4.2 Feedback, evaluation and development based on pilots

When new and/or improved assessment methods have been piloted, we collect feedback and evaluate how the methods are aligned with CoARA and how they serve their purpose of quality management methods (e.g. steer TAMK's operation based on strategy and objectives and develop quality of operations). Feedback from all the relevant actors (RDIC, HR etc.) in different levels and knowledge-based evaluation will give important input to develop the methods further.

Task 4.3 Implementation of the new procedures

New and/or improved assessment methods of research and researchers will be implemented and included into TAMK's quality system. The goal is also to include the renewed procedures of research assessment into the systematic evaluation of the quality system so that they will be systematically evaluated also in the future.

5 ACTION PLAN SCHEDULE

Objectives (WPs) and Targets (Ts)	2025		2026		2027		2028
	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring
WP1 Resource allocation, implementation of the action plan, communication and evaluation of the development process							
T1.1 Resource allocation							
T1.2 Communication							
T1.3 Evaluation							
WP2 Developing qualitative evaluation methods of research and RDIC projects							
T2.1 Evaluation							
T2.2 Development							
T2.3 Pilot							
T2.4 Implementation							
WP3 Developing qualitative evaluation methods of RDIC personnel and applicants							
T3.1 Evaluation							
T3.2 Development							
T3.3 Pilot							
T3.4 Implementation							
WP4 Evaluation and development of the renewed assessment procedures							
T4.1 Pilots of the new procedures							
T4.2 Feedback, evaluation and development based on pilots							
T4.3 Implementation of the new procedures							