



**IBEC Action Plan on
Reforming Research Assessment
CoARA Agreement
2023-2027**

May 2024



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Preamble

The Institute of Bioengineering of Catalonia (IBEC) signed on April 2023 the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and became member of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).

The signature of this agreement is aligned with the values of the institution by recognizing the diversity of the contributions to research, relying on qualitative evaluation for research quality assessment. This signature is also in line with the involvement of IBEC in Open Science.

As a signatory of the Agreement, IBEC shares this 5-year Action Plan to review and develop criteria, tools, and processes to achieve the core Commitments to reform research assessment issues in the institution.

To elaborate this action plan we have followed the Action Plan Guidelines provided by CoARA answering the following questions:

| Phase | Reflection Point | Guiding Questions |
|----------------|--|--|
| Starting Point | Reflect on your strategy and change approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What guiding principles do you (and your community) think are priorities in your approach to reform? How does your organisation intend to make the reforms in order to meet the guiding principles? What is the process by which your organisation will work on the reform? |
| | Involve your institutional community in the change process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are you planning to involve relevant actor groups (such as researchers at different career stages, research support staff, administrators, and others, depending on the scope of your organisation)? How will you share good practices (internally and with others)? |
| | Identify key challenges to address | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you identified the identify key challenges/gaps/bottlenecks/barriers in your organisation with regards to reforming research assessment and the adherence to the action plan? For which does your institution have the power/authority/resources to address? What will be needed to efficiently address them? And what alternatives/strategies can be useful in overcoming some of these challenges? |
| | Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does your organisation plan to enable recognition of more diverse contributions to research? How does your organisation plan to enable greater diversity in career paths and profiles? |
| | Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does your organisation plan to actively engage in and learn from research on research work? How does your organisation plan to accommodate qualitative evaluation mechanisms and base the use of metrics in a way that is aligned with your organisation's value system? |
| | Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does your organisation plan to mitigate reliance on JIF and h-index? |

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| Operational action plan for a 5-year time frame (CoARA Core Commitments listed) | particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index | |
| | Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does your organisation plan to mitigate reliance on organisation rankings? |
| | Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which resources will your institution allocate to the implementation of the research assessment reform? (Whether in terms of capacity or budget, to actively engage in the reform Journey) |
| | Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does your organisation plan to pilot or implement alternative/new assessment criteria, tools, and processes (e.g. narrative CV format, competency-based CV format, evidence-based CV format, diversification of research careers and associated career progression)? |
| | Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does your institution plan to provide training, guidance and support to assessment panels, committees, and juries? |
| | Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does your organisation plan to exchange practices and foster exchange of good practices in national and international contexts? |
| | Communicate progress made on adherence to the principles and implementation of the Commitments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will your organisation ensure the transparent communication of the organisation's research evaluation processes within and outside of the organisation? |
| | 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does your institution plans to monitor and (re)evaluate its assessment criteria, tools, and processes? What will be the frequency? Who will be involved in the evaluation? |

Action Plan

Strategy and change approach

IBEC has a framework on Open Science embedded in its institutional Strategic Plan 2023-2026 where, inside the Impact Pillar, considers Open Science as an objective. After a process with an open consultation to the whole IBEC community, IBEC of Trustees approved in May 2023 a [Policy on Open Science](#) with a section devoted to evaluation and the creation of the IBEC's Committee for Open Science in charge of the follow-up of the Open Science strategy and development at the institution.

Research assessment at IBEC is performed in the following situations: recruitment, evaluation/promotion, awards.

To meet CoARA guiding principles, IBEC has conducted a review of its criteria involved with the different processes.

The process is guided by the Strategy department of IBEC, taking advantage of its transversal role across the organisation.

Involvement of the institutional community in the change process

Researchers and management staff will be involved in the whole process by:

- being informed through dissemination of new trends in evaluation of research and adopted changes,
- being trained through annual courses on open science and research assessment
- being asked for certain issues (with surveys or similar tools),
- or by directly participating in the reform through the Commission for Open Science, that includes representatives of researchers and management staff at different levels.

Identification of key challenges to address

To identify the challenges to address it has been used the DORA tool *SPACE to evolve academic assessment: A rubric for analysing institutional conditions and progress indicators*. Moreover, people from the Strategy, HR department and the Deputy director for Talent and training have been reviewing the assessment processes at IBEC.

Revision process

IBEC has already conducted a revision (2023), based on the key points identified in the analysis. The goal was to review and adapt our evaluation and selection processes to DORA/CoARA, while maintaining our standards of excellence.

After the revision, we can conclude that we base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators. No inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index, are being made. We also avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment.

Processes including assessment and its revision:

A) To incorporate/retain new talent.

Evaluation committees (external or internal depending on the career level:

- a. For junior positions, we use internal committees, composed by our group leaders.
- b. For senior positions, we use our International Scientific Committee.

Evaluation is always qualitative, although supported by quantitative information about outputs: publications, projects, etc.

B) To evaluate/promote internal talent.

Group leader evaluation:

Performed by IBEC International Scientific Committee.

- Self-report: we have included evaluation criteria regarding open science aspects. Other aspects related to CoARA principles were already taken into account, like training and technology transfer.
- Summary of quantitative indicators: Publications with metrics, Project proposals submitted/granted, Contracts with industries, Patents, PhD thesis.

C) Awards.

- a. Doctoral Certificate of Excellence: Requirements include: Research Placement, Publications/Patents, Attendance to courses and seminars, Participation in Committees, Talks in conferences and PhD discussions, Outreach activities, PhD thesis submitted within 4 years. Criteria related to impact factors have been removed.
- b. Doctoral Award for the best candidates:
 - i. We have removed previous criteria related with Impact Factors.
 - ii. We have created a Selection Committee for the Award to perform qualitative evaluation.

Resources to reforming research assessment

In terms of human resources and leadership, the Strategy Department of IBEC has been designated as the responsible for promoting the implementation of the CoARA Plan.

A knowledge manager has been incorporated to support during the whole process.

Training is being offered to our researchers and management staff.

Awareness of the research assessment reform and training

The internal training catalogue has been reviewed according to LIBER Open Science Roadmap recommendations, to include training sessions to prepare our researchers and management staff to develop their careers in this novel landscape and during the transition period, providing them the tools and opportunities for career development in this new framework.

Transversal skills needed for the new open science and evaluation paradigm Training on Open Science has been included in the training path of our R1 and R2 researchers, including a workshop on Scientific Evaluation.

Communication tools

To communicate progress made on adherence to the principles and implementation of the Commitments, a Virtual Space dedicated to Open Science issues has been created at our institutional website, including reform assessment changes:

<https://ibecbarcelona.eu/open-science/>

Other communicative channels used:

- Internal: mailings with recent news on the issue, trainings, intranet with materials, ...
- External: website news, social networks posts, etc.

Exchanging of practices and experiences to enable mutual learning

IBEC is posting this document at the CoARA community at Zenodo and wants to exchange its experience and practices in all the networks and forums where it participates, among them the Spanish National Chapter.

We are also disseminating our experience in seminars organized by third parties.

Evaluation and impacts of the reform

An evaluation system of the assessment reform is to be set during 2024-2025, and a revision of the introduced changes should be conducted once at the middle of the 5 years plan (2025) and at the end of it again (2027).

This will be reviewed by IBEC's Committee for Open Science.