

RUHR  
UNIVERSITÄT  
BOCHUM

RUB

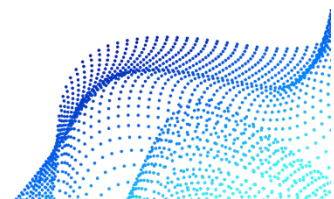
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**Ruhr University Bochum – Action Plan**  
**Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment**

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## Introduction

Founded as one of the first new universities in Germany after the second world war inaugurated in 1965, and with the ambition to become a reform university, Ruhr University Bochum (**RUB**) has rapidly developed into one of Germany's leading comprehensive universities, characterized by cutting-edge interdisciplinary research across traditional boundaries. **RUB** covers the entire spectrum of academic disciplines from the humanities, social and natural sciences to engineering and medicine organized in 21 faculties on a modern campus. Situated amid the dynamic Ruhr metropolitan area with about 40.000 students and 5.800 scientific and non-scientific employees, **RUB** utilizes the full potential of the region in its transition from a post-industrial region to a knowledge economy and society. To increase its impact further, **RUB** joined forces with its partners TU Dortmund University and the University of Duisburg-Essen more than 15 years ago to form the University Alliance Ruhr (UAR)<sup>1</sup>. Since 2020 **RUB** is part of the European University of Post-industrial Cities UNIC<sup>2</sup>, which develops new methods and models for research, education, and transfer, to face the tasks of the modern societal challenges. Through its "UNIC4ER – Engaged Research" unit, the consortium also focuses specifically on impact-oriented, systematic co-production of knowledge for and with society. In 2022 **RUB** joined the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN)<sup>3</sup>, which promotes international research collaborations on major global challenges capitalizing on the geographic and cultural diversity of its 24 member universities across 6 continents.

## Key Challenges in Reforming Research Assessment

Changing research assessment is an ambitious endeavour affecting and thus involving (at best) academia as a whole. To achieve sustainable results, reforms in this field need to be supported by scientific institutions as well as funding agencies. In this regard, it is our conviction, that universities need to spearhead these processes together with reliable partners joining the endeavour to achieve holistic, sustainable and fair change in research assessment. Due to this conviction, **RUB** is founding partner of CoARA's National Chapter Germany in order to actively engage in the necessary discussions and to exchange best practices on a national and global level, subsequently. We are convinced that only a broad acceptance of CoARA's goals in academia will lead to sustainable changes. This challenge starts at the very local level and naturally grows with its increasing framework.

At **RUB** these challenges not only affect research assessment but are also addressed in various other contexts dealing with the creation of a diverse, transparent and engaging research and working environment at our university (cf. Ruhr University's Strategy and Change Approach). A major challenge in the successful implementation of the action plan

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.uaruhr.de/en/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unic.eu/en>

<sup>3</sup> <https://wun.ac.uk/>

at RUB is bringing together the traditions, perspectives and ideas of the different disciplines at our university spanning from medicine and life sciences via natural sciences and engineering to social sciences and humanities. To meet this challenge successfully, we aim at a broad participation of our researchers across disciplinary boundaries, the exchange of best practices and the inclusion of reforms in existing processes, guidelines and regulations.

## **Ruhr University's Strategy and Change Approach**

Ruhr University Bochum signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA) in the end of 2023 due to our strong conviction of the need for transparent and fair research assessment as envisioned by CoARA. It is embedded in further endeavours to sustainably work towards a diverse, transparent and engaging research and working environment at RUB. Measures planned and launched in this regard are part of our Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)<sup>4</sup> which has been awarded with the HR Excellence in Research Award by the European Commission in January 2024. The core commitments of the ARRA are also closely linked to our ongoing endeavour to reform career paths towards better predictable careers in academia (*Konzept Neue Karrierewege*)<sup>5</sup> as well as to the gender and diversity standards, commitments and future developments published in our Codex Freedom and Diversity at RUB<sup>6</sup> and our equal opportunities framework<sup>7</sup>.

In all these interlocked measures, various stakeholders – involving researchers as well as other staff from our university – are engaged. Therefore, implementing the ARRA will be dealt with in different temporary and permanent committees: Alongside the strategic and operational steering committee anchored in RUB's rectorate, the activities in connection with CoARA will initially be organized by a broader committee (CoARA Monitoring Committee) under the supervision of our Vice-Rector for Research and Transfer, in which researchers from all major research areas of our university and from all career stages participate as well as further non-scientific staff members.

The CoARA Monitoring Committee acts both as a sounding board as well as a multiplier into the university.

The measures outlined in the following Action Plan meet the constantly evolving demands of academia regarding the assessment of research achievements and expand the existing

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<sup>4</sup> <https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/hrs4r-process-ruhr-university-bochum-quality-development-promote-academic-careers>

<sup>5</sup> <https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/node/775>

<sup>6</sup> <https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/codex-freedom-and-diversity-rub>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.chancengleich.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/cg/mam/content/rub\\_rahmenplan\\_gleichstellung\\_2020\\_2024.pdf](https://www.chancengleich.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/cg/mam/content/rub_rahmenplan_gleichstellung_2020_2024.pdf) (German only, but cf. RUB's positions regarding equal opportunities in research, study and administration: <https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/equal-opportunities-research-study-and-administration>)

efforts at **RUB**. In the light of ongoing discussions, we expect the Action Plan to be refined and further developed in order to improve it and coordinate the measures in an even more targeted manner.

## Ruhr University's Operational Action Plan Aligning with CoARA's Core Commitments

Reflection Point/Core Commitments	Guiding Questions	RUB Measures	
		Status quo	Objectives & actions
1. 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"> <li>How does your organisation plan to enable recognition of more diverse contributions to research?</li> <li>How does your organisation plan to enable greater diversity in career paths and profiles?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise the variety of contributions as part of a holistic evaluation of research achievements (already established in tenure track processes [via self-report]), cf. Attachment 1</li> <li><i>Konzept Neue Karrierewege</i> (Concept New Career-paths): The basic concept has been developed and is currently transferred to the pilot phase</li> <li>HRS4R-Award (<a href="https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/hrs4r-process-ruhr-university-bochum-quality-development-promote-academic-careers">https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/hrs4r-process-ruhr-university-bochum-quality-development-promote-academic-careers</a>): The implementation of the quality development process for the working conditions and career development of scientific staff has started in 2024</li> <li>The diversity of careers in research and their recognition are reflected in the Codex Freedom and Diversity at RUB (<a href="https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/codex-freedom-and-diversity-rub">https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/codex-freedom-and-diversity-rub</a>) and included in our equal opportunities measures such as RUB's equal opportunities framework (cf. <a href="https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/equal-opportunities-research-study-and-administration">https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/equal-opportunities-research-study-and-administration</a>).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Konzept Neue Karrierewege</i>: further development through faculty-specific elaborations, evaluation and first assessment</li> <li>Make bi-lingual job advertisements (German and English) standard for research (related) positions at all levels</li> <li>HRS4R: Measures concerning research assessment and related issues are evaluated and adapted in an iterative process</li> <li>Intensify discussion on reforming research assessment in relevant committees</li> </ul>

<p>2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluations for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does your organisation plan to actively engage in and learn from research on research work?</li> <li>• 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?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peer review is already central in research evaluation processes, e.g. in appointment procedures for scientific positions, but not yet established for career stages below professorship</li> <li>- For PhD candidates all faculties established common standards across all disciplines coordinated by the RUB Research School (joint supervisions, mandatory supervision agreement with framework conditions for the PhD)</li> <li>- Open Science Policy (<a href="https://public.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/ab/Lists/ab/Attachments/1815/ab1469.pdf">https://public.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/ab/Lists/ab/Attachments/1815/ab1469.pdf</a>): According to RUB's understanding, making scientific findings and data openly accessible, reusable and verifiable actively contributes to transparent quality assurance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish structured (peer) review procedures for election processes for career stages below professorship (embedded in the <i>Konzept Neue Karrierewege</i>)</li> <li>- Inform about tailored, discipline-specific evaluation criteria for researchers in different career stages in accordance with those used in tenure track procedures (cf. attachment 1, also embedded in the <i>Konzept Neue Karrierewege</i>)</li> </ul>
<p>3. Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does your organisation plan to mitigate reliance on JIF and h-index?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In research assessment, focus is already on structured (peer) review processes (e.g. in appointment procedures, PhD supervisions etc.)</li> <li>- Reliance on the JIF and h-index is currently part of discussions in relevant decision-making bodies (e.g.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a guideline/recommendation on target-oriented and purposeful use of metrics</li> </ul>

<p>publication-based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factors (JIF) and h-index</p>		<p>Tenure Track committees of the university and the faculties)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of impact factors varies greatly across the disciplines, but is often used as an approximate first assessment of scientists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication of the guidelines/recommendation within the university requesting faculties to adapt them to their discipline-specific requirements</li> <li>- Within the institution, discourage the use of JIF and h-index as single bibliometric indicator for research assessment of individual researchers and raise awareness for its responsible use in connection with a set of further (bibliometric) indicators (e.g. via website, instructions and guidelines within specific processes)</li> </ul>
<p>4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does your organisation plan to mitigate reliance on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rankings are monitored but are not used for research assessment at <b>RUB</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raise awareness of the use and limitations of rankings in general and its implications within the university's community</li> </ul>

in research assessment	organisation rankings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The <b>RUB</b> Action Plan at this stage focusses on the assessment of individual researchers' performance, not on assessing individual facilities of the university</li> </ul>	(e.g. via websites and guidelines)
5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The research assessment reform at <b>RUB</b> involves various areas both in science as well as in the administration. Many aspects are already part of the daily works.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integration of measures in line with the ARRA into established and ongoing processes</li> <li>- Establishment of a Monitoring Committee responsible for the monitoring of CoARA-related measures</li> <li>- Embed the discussions about research assessment and evaluation criteria in relevant university committees (Tenure Track Commission, Commission for Research and Knowledge Transfer, Committee for Diversity, Equal Opportunities Committee)</li> </ul>



<p>6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Used tools and processes are evaluated and renewed iteratively</li> <li>- Narrative/hybrid CVs have recently been introduced by the <i>Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft</i> (DFG), narrative elements can optionally be added to CVs: as German university, <b>RUB</b> is member of the DFG and closely follows its developments</li> <li>- The <i>Konzept Neue Karrierewege</i> at <b>RUB</b>, which also includes a concept for tenured positions, aims at a stronger transparency of career tracks in science and adjacent fields</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Konzept Neue Karrierewege</i>: Further development and evaluation of research assessment criteria and processes are part of the concept's iterative assessment. The criteria will be develop tailored to specific disciplines and for researchers in different career stages in accordance with those used in tenure track procedures (cf. attachment 1)</li> <li>- <i>Konzept Neue Karrierewege</i>: Introduction and differentiation of the occupational fields researcher/lecturer and academic manager in the framework of <b>RUB's</b> concept for tenured positions</li> </ul>
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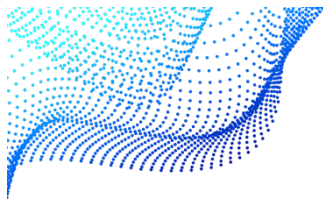
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction of templates for narrative/hybrid CVs based on the design of the DFG's CV template for additional use</li> <li>- Evaluation and renewal of existing tools according to the ARRA</li> <li>- Tools and processes will additionally be evaluated and revised in discussions with other engaged institutions on the national (e.g. within the University Alliance Ruhr and the CoARA National Chapter) and international level (e.g. within the CoARA network)</li> </ul>
7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does your institution plan to provide training, guidance and support to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basic version of a website with relevant information about fair research assessment is already available: <a href="https://forschung.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/de/forschungsleistungen-fair-bewerten">https://forschung.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/de/forschungsleistungen-fair-bewerten</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implement a CoARA-website gathering and providing information and broadly advertise it on campus</li> </ul>

provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use	assessment panels, committees, and juries?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tutorial videos, e-learning tool, workshop and training offers on unconscious bias training (which may play an important role in assessing researchers) are available through RUB's Department of Organizational and Professional Development</li> <li>- Appointment commissioners are installed to ensure the long-term consistency, quality and transparency of all recruiting and appointment procedures (<a href="https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/appointment-commissioners">https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/appointment-commissioners</a>)</li> <li>- RUB Research School (<a href="https://www.research-school.rub.de/">https://www.research-school.rub.de/</a>) offers a broad portfolio of workshops and counselling services to PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers touching upon various aspects of the ARRA (e.g. good scientific practice, career planning, Ombudsperson)</li> <li>- Research Academy Ruhr (<a href="https://www.research-academy-ruhr.de/index.html.en">https://www.research-academy-ruhr.de/index.html.en</a>) further complements the portfolio of the RUB Research School with regard to postdoctoral researchers and junior faculty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The creation of videos and guidelines for different groups/stakeholders affected by the research reform is planned in the context of a joint project of RUB and the Universities Oulu and Tampere (granted via CoARA Boost-fund)</li> <li>- Equip the appointment commissioners at RUB with information about the ARRA to be taken into account in their work and to enable them to act as multipliers further communicating the ARRA principles in all faculties of RUB</li> </ul>
8. Exchange practices and experiences to	• How does your organisation plan to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RUB is founding member of the CoARA National Chapter Germany which is dedicated to the exchange of best practices and mutual learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further enhance discussions and exchange</li> </ul>

enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition	exchange practices and foster exchange of good practices in national and international contexts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>RUB</b> is connected internationally and active in networks such as WUN and UNIC (cf. Introduction), in which also CoARA relevant topics are discussed</li> <li>- The UNIC-network also fostered the mutual exchange with the Finnish universities of Oulu and Tampere, leading to the successful application for a joint project in the CoARA Boost-initiative</li> <li>- On the national level, <b>RUB</b> participates in discussions about CoARA and related topics in meetings of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), the Rectors' Conference of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (LRK) and of the Vice-Rectors for Research of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia</li> <li>- On the local level, research assessment is an integral part of discussions within the University Alliance Ruhr, which is also member of CoARA</li> </ul>	<p>in the CoARA National Chapter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrate best practices from the community into <b>RUB's</b> own evaluation procedures</li> <li>- Make best practices available to <b>RUB's</b> community and beyond via a CoARA-specific website</li> <li>- Share the outcome of the CoARA Boost-project broadly within CoARA's network and beyond (via presentations, websites etc.)</li> <li>- Strive to reconcile the Action Plans within the University Alliance Ruhr</li> </ul>
9. Communicate progress made on adherence to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will your organisation ensure the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information on relevant aspects of the ARRA is partially available on different websites of the university (cf. Core commitments 1. and 7.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidating information on research assessment on a central platform/website</li> </ul>

the principles and implementation of the Commitments	transparent communication of the organisation's research evaluation processes within and outside of the organisation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Current developments are broadcasted via RUB's newsportal (e.g. <a href="https://news.rub.de/wissenschaft/2024-02-12-beitritt-zu-netzwerk-forschungsleistungen-fair-bewerten">https://news.rub.de/wissenschaft/2024-02-12-beitritt-zu-netzwerk-forschungsleistungen-fair-bewerten</a>)</li> <li>- Changes in procedures (e.g. appointment and other administrative procedures) are communicated to all stakeholders involved via internal channels</li> </ul>	<p>and making steps of the evaluation process transparent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish the CoARA Monitoring Committee as multiplying body to communicate to-date information into the faculties</li> <li>- Equip the appointment commissioners at RUB with information about the ARRA to be taken into account in their work</li> </ul>
10. Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, and make data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does your institution plan to monitor and (re)evaluate its assessment criteria, tools, and processes? What will be the frequency? Who will be</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research evaluation practices and processes are currently already monitored, evaluated and renewed iteratively within the responsible committees and/or departments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many aspects of the ARRA are integral part of other ongoing developments at RUB and will be integrated in their evaluation processes (cf. Core commitments 1, 5, 6)</li> <li>- Establish the CoARA Monitoring Committee as</li> </ul>

openly available for evidence gathering and research	involved in the evaluation?		<p>sounding board to reflect the campus' opinions back into the university management (alongside with other existing committees like the Tenure Track Commission and the Commission for Research and Knowledge Transfer, cf. Core commitment 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Iterative, central monitoring of the Action Plan by <b>RUB's</b> CoARA Operational Board and the CoARA Monitoring Committee with a thorough evaluation 5 years after the publication of the Action Plan</li> </ul>
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## **Ruhr University Bochum – Action Plan: Attachment 1**

### **Evaluation Criteria for Individual Research Assessments at RUB<sup>8</sup>**

#### *Main Criteria:*

1. Scientific quality, originality and range of content of the research (this includes the expansion of the scientific fields of work and the innovative content of the work since the dissertation)
2. Publications in terms of quality, quantity and international visibility
3. Acquisition of third-party funding according to type and scope
4. Scientific presentations in terms of quality and quantity
5. International research experience and research collaborations
6. Academic quality, originality and range of teaching content
7. Supervision of theses and doctoral projects
8. Knowledge transfer
9. Participation in academic self-administration, further commitment to the university
10. Interdisciplinary competences (strategic competence, leadership competence, communication skills, co-operation skills)

#### *Additional Possible Criteria:*

11. Prizes, awards and scholarships
12. Organisation of specialist conferences
13. Coordination of research networks
14. Editorships

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<sup>8</sup> Based on the „Criteria for the evaluation of tenure track professorships and in RUB Career Track procedures” as published in RUB’s “Regulations amending the regulations for the interim and final evaluation of tenure-track professorships” (<https://public.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/ab/Lists/ab/Attachments/1887/AB-1534.pdf>).

- 15. Expert activities
- 16. Involvement in scientific (specialised) societies
- 17. Membership of academies

