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CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

Bregt Saenen (EUA), Anna Hatch (DORA), Stephen Curry (DORA), Vanessa Proudman (SPARC Europe) and Ashley Lakoduk (DORA)

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European University Association asbl

Avenue de l'Yser 24

Rue du Rhône 114

1040 Brussels

Case postale 3174

Belgium

1211 Geneva 3, Switzerland

+32 (0) 2 230 55 44

+41 22 552 02 96

www.eua.eu · info@eua.eu

Table of content

Introduction	4
Reimagining academic career assessment	5
Stories of innovation and change	7
Main findings	8
What: what changed and key characteristics	8
Who: the stakeholders involved and driving the process	9
Why: motivation for change	9
How: processes and dynamics for developing, implementing, and managing change	10
Conclusion: supporting implementation	11
Go for open, accurate, transparent, and responsible practices	11
Focus on raising awareness, community engagement, and building capacity	12
Aim for institutional initiatives backed by a concerted approach	12
Case studies: universities	13
Ghent University	14
Open University of Catalonia	18
University of Bath	21
University College London	24
University Medical Center Utrecht	27
University of Nottingham Ningbo China	30
Tampere University	33
Case studies: national consortia	36
The Dutch Recognition & Rewards Programme	37
Responsible Research Network, Finland	41
Universities Norway	44

Introduction

This report and the accompanying online repository¹ bring together case studies in responsible academic career assessment. Gathered by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA),² European University Association (EUA),³ and Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) Europe,⁴ the case studies independently serve as a source of inspiration for institutions looking to improve their academic career assessment practices.

Following the publication of guidelines and recommendations on more responsible evaluation approaches, such as DORA,⁵ the *Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics*,⁶ and the *Metric Tide*,⁷ more and more institutions have begun to consider how to implement a range of practical changes and innovations in recent years. However, information about the creation and development of new practices in academic career assessment are not always easy to find.

Collectively, the case studies will further facilitate this “practical turn” toward implementation by providing a structured overview and conceptual clarity on key characteristics and contextual factors. In doing so, the report examines emerging pathways of institutional reform of academic career assessment.

We deliberately talk about “academic” assessment, which refers to the entire catalog of methods that are used to evaluate the outputs and impacts of academic activities for the purposes of recruitment and career progression (the focus of the case studies in this report), the performance of academic units, and applications for funding within institutional or national systems. While discussions on responsible practices were initially limited to “research” assessment, the scope of the debate has since been broadened to include the incentives and rewards available for all academic activities, i.e., education, research, and innovation in service to society.

More than 16,000 individuals and 2,000 organizations have signed DORA as of December 2020, including about 175 academic institutions. While there is widespread consensus about the need to reform academic career assessment, the development and implementation of new policies and practices is happening slowly. A major barrier for institutions is the size and complexity of the task. Not only do new policies need to be developed, they must be adopted by faculty and staff for any meaningful change to be realized. Documentation of good practice exists, but these examples often leave out valuable information about the process of change itself, such as the motivations, the people involved, how policies and practices were developed and implemented, and what the time frame for change was. Without this knowledge, the institutional changes needed for academic career assessment reform will stall. This report and the accompanying repository of case studies aim to fill this gap by documenting and examining key elements of effective academic career assessment reform within universities and research institutions.

This introduction provides a brief overview of the discussion on responsible academic career assessment as it has developed in the past decade and summarizes the main findings from the 10 case studies published at the time of launch. We also offer recommendations for organizations looking to improve policy and practices based on our previous work and supported by the findings from the case studies.

1 <https://sfdora.org/dora-case-studies/>.

2 <https://sfdora.org/>.

3 <https://eua.eu/>.

4 <https://sparceurope.org/>.

5 DORA (2012). *San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment*. Retrieved 6 November 2020, from: <https://sfdora.org/read/>.

6 Hicks, D., Wouters, P., Waltman, L., de Rijcke, S., & Rafols, I. (2015). The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics. *Nature*, 520, pp. 429-431. Retrieved 6 November 2020, from: <http://www.leidenmanifesto.org/>.

7 Wilsdon, J., et al. (2015). *The Metric Tide: Report of the Independent Review of the Role of Metrics in Research Assessment and Management*. HEFCE. Retrieved 6 November 2020, from: <https://responsiblemetrics.org/the-metric-tide>.



Reimagining academic career assessment

The discussion on responsible academic career assessment has emerged to take center stage over the past decade as a way to promote open scholarship and improve academic culture. Universities, research institutes, research funding organizations, learned societies, policy makers, and others have all joined the discussion to identify ways forward. Awareness has grown that revising assessment procedures must be a shared responsibility and requires a systems approach uniting these main actors.

Discussions on responsible academic career assessment started with concerns over the widespread misuse of quantitative metrics as proxies for research quality, most notably the Journal Impact Factor (JIF). The academic community was the first to protest against a range of bad practices in this regard and to develop guidelines and recommendations to improve the situation. In 2013 DORA invited individuals and institutions to sign up to its set of recommendations, the first and most important of which is “Do not use journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual scientist’s contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions.”⁸ DORA emphasizes that institutions should consider the value and impact of all outputs and outcomes of scholarly work and should be transparent about the criteria used in evaluation. This was followed in 2015 by comprehensive guidelines for responsible academic career assessment published in the *Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics*⁹ and *The Metric Tide*.¹⁰

“Technical” discussions on finding the right balance between qualitative and quantitative assessment approaches or the responsible design and use of quantitative metrics continue to be an important part of reviewing academic career assessment. In 2019 EUA surveyed academic career assessment practices among 260 universities in 32 European countries. The result of this comprehensive exercise showed that 75% of responding institutions continue to use the JIF, making it the most widely used publication metric.¹¹ Even more worryingly, universities reported this *journal-level* metric was being applied to *individual-level* evaluations of researchers and their output. In a survey of academic institutions in the United States and Canada, Erin McKiernan and colleagues found that the JIF was mentioned in 40% of the review, promotion, and tenure documents at research-intensive universities surveyed.¹²

The SPARC Europe study on Open Science funder policies and practices in Europe also found that quantitative indicators (including the H-index and JIFs of publications) are still being used by some funders in Europe with about one-third of the cohort of over 60 funders in Europe still using the JIF.¹³ Yet one should point out that some funders are using a range of qualitative and quantitative criteria in the evaluation of their grant applications, such as the quality of the research uptake, dissemination strategy or plans for achieving social impact, and the evidence of past societal impact achieved or contributions to equality and diversity.

The discussion on responsible academic career assessment has evolved in several significant ways. First, a shift has taken place from improving evaluation practices as a goal in itself to redesigning them as a

8 DORA (2012). *San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment*. Retrieved 18 August 2020, from: <https://sfedora.org/read/>.

9 Hicks, D., Wouters, P., Waltman, L., de Rijcke, S., & Rafols, I. (2015). *The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics*. *Nature*, 520, pp. 429–431. Retrieved 18 August 2020, from: <http://www.leidenmanifesto.org/>.

10 Wilsdon, J., et al. (2015). *The Metric Tide: Report of the Independent Review of the Role of Metrics in Research Assessment and Management*. HEFCE. Retrieved 18 August 2020, from: <https://responsiblemetrics.org/the-metric-tide>.

11 Saenen, B., Morais, R., Gaillard, V., & Borrell-Damián, L. (2019). *Research Assessment in the Transition to Open Science. 2019 EUA Open Science and Access Survey Results*. Brussels: EUA, p. 25. Retrieved 21 August 2020, from: <https://eua.eu/resources/publications/888:research-assessment-in-the-transition-to-open-science.html>.

12 McKiernan, E.C., Schimanski, L.A., Nieves, C.M., Matthias, L., Niles, M.T., & Alperin, J.P. (2019). *Meta-Research: Use of the Journal Impact Factor in academic review, promotion, and tenure evaluations*. *eLife* 2019;8:e47338. Retrieved 6 November 2020, from: <https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.47338.001>.

13 Foschi, M., Richens, E., & Johnson, R. (2019). *Insights into European research funder Open policies and practices*. SPARC Europe, p. 19. Retrieved 16 November 2020, from: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3401278>.

CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

means to improve the academic culture.¹⁴ As such, the discussion is now closely related to the transition to Open Science,¹⁵ strengthening research ethics and integrity,¹⁶ and promoting a broader range of academic activities, including restoring parity of esteem for learning and teaching with research and innovation.¹⁷

Second, the range of actors involved in the discussion on responsible academic career assessment has continued to broaden, turning it into a collaborative effort among universities, research institutes, research funding organizations, learned societies, and policymakers. Research funding organizations are looking into the “robustness” of their evaluation practices,¹⁸ while policymakers, especially the European Union institutions, are using the transition to Open Science as an opportunity to improve evaluation.¹⁹ At national levels these actors have also come together and developed collaborative approaches to improve assessment procedures, as we will see in this report.

However, for all the progress that has been made, implementing more responsible academic career assessment practices is a real challenge. A wide variety of barriers and difficulties have been identified that explain why progress at the practical level has generally been slow and incremental. The 2019 EUA survey showed that just under half of respondents identified the complexity of reviewing their approach to academic career assessment as one of their main challenges.²⁰ The SPARC Europe funder study also reports that in 2019 only a small number of research funders, 7 out of 62, give more weight to Open Access publications in grant evaluation. Among this group, three research funders only consider publications that are Open Access. Similarly only seven report using Open Science criteria, e.g., the Open Science Career Matrix or OS-CAM,²¹ in grant assessment, showing that many funders in Europe do not yet incentivize Open Science practices and outcomes in their assessment approaches.²²

14 Saenen, B., and Borrell-Damián, L. (2019). *Reflections on University Research Assessment: key concepts, issues and actors*. Brussels: EUA. Retrieved 25 November 2020, from: <https://eua.eu/resources/publications/825:reflections-on-university-research-assessment-key-concepts,-issues-and-actors.html>.

15 Mendez, E., Lawrence, R., MacCallum, C. J., & Moar, E. (2020). *Progress on Open Science: Towards a shared research knowledge system - final report of the Open Science Policy Platform*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved 27 August 2020, from: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d36f8071-99bd-11ea-aac4-01aa75ed71a1>.

16 See for example: Aubert Bonn, N. (2020). *The failure of success - Careers, cultures, and integrity in science*. (Doctoral dissertation) and Moher, D., Bouter, L., Kleinert, S., Glasziou, P., Sham, M.H., Barbour, V., et al. (2020). The Hong Kong Principles for assessing researchers: Fostering research integrity. *PLoS Biol*, 18(7): e3000737. Retrieved 25 August 2020, from: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3000737>.

17 te Pas, S., & Zhang, T., eds. (2019). *Career paths in teaching: Thematic Peer Group Report*. Brussels: EUA. Retrieved 27 August 2020, from: <https://eua.eu/resources/publications/808:career-paths-in-teaching-thematic-peer-group-report.html>.

18 Science Europe (2020). *Position Statement and Recommendations on Research Assessment Processes*. Brussels: Science Europe. Retrieved 27 August, from: <https://www.scienceurope.org/our-resources/position-statement-research-assessment-processes/>.

19 European Commission Expert Group on Altmetrics (2017). *Next-generation metrics: Responsible metrics and evaluation for open science*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved 16 November 2020, from: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b858d952-0a19-11e7-8a35-01aa75ed71a1>, European Commission Working Group on Rewards under Open Science (2017). *Evaluation of Research Careers fully acknowledging Open Science Practices. Rewards, incentives and/or recognition for researchers practicing Open Science*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved 16 November 2020, from: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/47a3a330-c9cb-11e7-8e69-01aa75ed71a1>, European Commission Working Group on Education and Skills under Open Science (2017). *Providing researchers with the skills and competencies they need to practise Open Science*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved 16 November 2020, from: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3b4e1847-c9ca-11e7-8e69-01aa75ed71a1>, European Commission (2018). *Mutual Learning Exercise: Open Science - Altmetrics and Rewards*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved 16 November 2020, from: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/449cc187-693f-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1>, European Commission Expert Group on the Future of Scholarly Publishing and Scholarly Communication (2019). *Future of Scholarly Publishing and Scholarly Communication. Report of the Expert Group to the European Commission*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved 16 November 2020, from: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/464477b3-2559-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1> and European Commission Expert Group on Indicators for Researchers' Engagement with Open Science (2019). *Indicator Frameworks for Fostering Open Knowledge Practices in Science and Scholarship*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved 16 November 2020, from: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b69944d4-01f3-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1>.

20 Saenen, B., Morais, R., Gaillard, V., & Borrell-Damián, L. (2019). *Research Assessment in the Transition to Open Science. 2019 EUA Open Science and Access Survey Results*. Brussels: EUA, pp. 32-33. Retrieved 21 August 2020, from: <https://eua.eu/resources/publications/888:research-assessment-in-the-transition-to-open-science.html>.

21 European Commission Working Group on Rewards under Open Science (2017). *Evaluation of Research Careers fully acknowledging Open Science Practices. Rewards, incentives and/or recognition for researchers practicing Open Science*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved 16 November 2020, from: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/47a3a330-c9cb-11e7-8e69-01aa75ed71a1>.

22 Fosci, M., Richens, E., & Johnson, R. (2019). *Insights into European research funder Open policies and practices*. SPARC Europe. Retrieved 16 November 2020, from: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3401278>.

To help institutions handle the complexity involved with reviewing their assessment approaches, the discussion needs to move from high-level guidelines and recommendations to concrete practices. Responsible academic career assessment needs to turn toward implementation. A series of webinars organized by EUA in May 2020²³ and a meeting on driving institutional change co-sponsored by DORA²⁴ and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in October 2019 are just two of many events during which the discussion between representatives from universities and other actors made clear that their main focus is shifting toward the practical implementation of improved practices and policies. To support the creation of new policies and practices, DORA has developed and published a framework for institutional action. In outline, this involves: 1) understanding obstacles that prevent change; 2) experimenting with ideas and approaches at all levels; 3) creating a shared vision when reviewing and revising research assessment practices; and 4) communicating that vision internally and externally.²⁵ Furthermore, because experimentation involves risk, DORA also published five design principles to guide the development of interventions to improve practices and a set of strategies to address four infrastructural implications of common cognitive biases in academic career assessment.²⁶

Stories of innovation and change

This report and the accompanying repository aim to stimulate the implementation discussion on responsible academic career assessment. The case studies are intended to serve as inspiration for institutions planning to become or already engaged in a complex review process, and to provide potential pathways of change.

Two types of case studies are included in this report and (at the time of launch) the online repository. The majority of cases relate to institutional-level policies and practices. Each of these was developed through a unique and ongoing interplay of internal drivers and external pressures. As such, they show a wide range of characteristics in how to approach one shared objective: making academic career assessment at their institution more responsible.

Institutional-level cases were selected from DORA signatories and SPARC Europe and EUA members involved in activities and events on academic career assessment. While 9 of the 10 cases come from the Western world, the authors hope to continue developing the online repository to include more cases from other geographic regions. Seven institutional-level cases are included:

- ◆ Ghent University (Belgium)
- ◆ Open University of Catalonia (Catalonia)
- ◆ University of Bath (United Kingdom)
- ◆ University College London (United Kingdom)
- ◆ University Medical Center Utrecht (The Netherlands)
- ◆ University of Nottingham Ningbo China (People's Republic of China)
- ◆ Tampere University (Finland)

²³European University Association (May 2020). *2020 EUA Webinar Series on Academic Career Assessment in the Transition to Open Science*. Retrieved 28 September 2020, from: <https://eua.eu/events/129-2020-eua-webinar-series-on-academic-career-assessment-in-the-transition-to-open-science.html>.

²⁴See: <https://sfdora.org/meetings/>

²⁵Hatch, A. & Curry, S. (2020). *Research Culture: Changing how we evaluate research is difficult, but not impossible*. *eLife* 2020;9:e58654. Retrieved 6 November 2020, from: <https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.58654>.

²⁶Hatch, A. & Schmidt, R. (2020). *Rethinking Research Assessment: Ideas for Action*. DORA. Retrieved 13 December 2020, from: <https://sfdora.org/resource/rethinking-research-assessment/>, Hatch, A. & Schmidt, R. (2020). *Rethinking Research Assessment: Unintended Cognitive and Systems Biases*. DORA. Retrieved 13 December 2020, from: <https://sfdora.org/resource/rethinking-research-assessment-unintended-cognitive-and-systems-biases/>

CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

A smaller number of case studies are national consortia wherein the main actors of a given country have come together to review academic career assessment policies and practices. These are important initiatives with the potential to make systemic reforms that would be beyond the capacity of individual institutions. Three national-level cases are included:

- ◆ The Dutch Recognition & Rewards Programme (The Netherlands)
- ◆ Responsible Research Network, Finland (Finland)
- ◆ Universities Norway (Norway)

It is important to note that no hierarchy exists between these two types of cases. Institutional-level initiatives do not necessarily precede national consortia, nor does the existence or absence of national consortia say anything about the initiatives that are being taken at the institutional level in a given country. Instead this report will make clear that each type of case study has a distinct, but complementary role to play in improving academic career assessment practices.

Main findings

What can we learn from the case studies included in this report? This collection does not claim to be representative of the many ways in which universities and national consortia are and could potentially be developing and implementing more responsible academic career assessment practices. Nevertheless, comparing the “what,” “who,” “why,” and “how” of these cases reveals emerging pathways of change.

What: what changed and key characteristics

Starting with the “what” or key characteristics of the cases, we find a shared objective to move away from a limited set of assessment practices based on quantitative publication metrics. The cases aim to develop and implement a more holistic approach that incentivizes and rewards a broader range of academic activities. Rooted in the “technical” side of the discussion on academic career assessment (see above), the institutions and national consortia included in this collection are either putting less emphasis on or moving away entirely from quantitative publication metrics in their approach to career assessment. This shift was codified in different ways by introducing various policy instruments. For example, the Finnish consortium, University College London, and the University of Bath each developed a set of principles to outline their approaches to assessment, while the Open University of Catalonia developed a DORA Action Plan.

The case studies also share the longer-term goal to improve the academic culture at their institution or in their national system. Making “technical” improvements is clearly a means to an end, reflecting the broadening scope of the discussion on academic career assessment (see above). It should be noted that improving the academic culture does not necessarily mean introducing changes or entirely novel assessment practices. Most cases included in this collection aim to change the existing culture and to chart a new course going forward. For example, Ghent University, the Open University of Catalonia, and the University Medical Center Utrecht are moving away from past assessment practices focused on quantitative publication metrics and their negative effects on the academic culture at their institutions. However, this is different from the situation in an institution like the University of Bath or the Norwegian national consortium, where the goal is rather to articulate an existing culture in order to deepen and reinforce it.

A key finding from this collection of case studies is that they are all confronted with a limited awareness of and capacity for incentivizing and rewarding a broader range of academic activities. The 2019 EUA survey found that assessment practices not focused on publications were less widespread and less developed,

especially for individual-level career evaluations.²⁷ Almost all case studies refer to this obstacle in one way or another and often highlight it as being at the top of their agenda. Regarding limited awareness, Ghent University and the Open University of Catalonia both received questions from academic staff and had to provide guidance on the information that would be used in evaluations in lieu of quantitative publication metrics. Regarding capacity, the Finnish consortium's main focus is on improving the capacity of its national evaluation system to incentivize and reward a broader range of academic activities.

Who: the stakeholders involved and driving the process

The case studies also identified “who” was involved in the institutional change process. While the constellation of actors varies across institutions and consortia, a few commonalities are evident. Coalition-building is seen as important to gain the bottom-up support necessary for change. Libraries are not the only entity that can do this work, but they are commonly perceived as well positioned to do so as a centralized university resource with bibliometric expertise that serves academic departments. For example, librarians played prominent roles conducting outreach at University College London and the University of Nottingham Ningbo China that led to further action. Human Resources championed responsible academic career assessment at Ghent University, where policy development is shared between HR and the institution's Research Council.

The creation of committees, working groups, and task forces was another recurring element of the institutional change process. The Open University of Catalonia, University College London, the University of Bath, and the Norwegian consortia all use standing or task-and-finish groups to guide the process, engage a diverse range of stakeholders in the discussion, and ensure a sustainable implementation of their initiatives.

Why: motivation for change

Moving to the “why” or motivations behind the case studies included in this collection we find that they broadly share the same internal drivers and external influences, albeit combining and interacting in different ways. For institutional-level cases, “internal” means any initiative or discussion emerging from or present within the community at a given university, while “external” refers to pressures and influences originating from other actors or the broader context. For national-level cases, “internal” means initiatives or discussions happening within the national community, while “external” refers to international pressures and influences. While this is an arbitrary distinction, since internal discussions are often closely related to those taking place in the external context, it helps to bring into focus some of the dynamics behind the reforms discussed in this report.

Initiatives to develop and implement more responsible approaches to academic career assessment often draw on discussions that are already taking place among staff members of an institution or within the national system, which was the case for University College London. Concerns over the limitations and negative effects of current assessment practices are an obvious example and are indeed commonly referred to as having prepared the groundwork for more concrete initiatives. For example, at Ghent University misgivings were broadly shared about how the institution's career assessment system promoted ever more competition between academics. Moreover, various discussions on improving the academic culture increasingly look toward existing incentive and reward structures as an important and even essential means to achieve other goals. Among the case studies these most often include the transition to Open Science and parity of esteem for learning and teaching with research and innovation. Gender equality, research ethics and integrity, and mental health and wellbeing are also mentioned as drivers of change, albeit to a lesser extent.

²⁷ Saenen, B., Morais, R., Gaillard, V., & Borrell-Damián, L. (2019). *Research Assessment in the Transition to Open Science. 2019 EUA Open Science and Access Survey Results*. Brussels: EUA, pp. 25-28. Retrieved 21 August 2020, from: <https://eua.eu/resources/publications/888:research-assessment-in-the-transition-to-open-science.html>.

CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

External influences play an ambiguous role in this collection of case studies. They are often mentioned as barriers to change, given that on the international stage career assessment practices are mostly still focused on quantitative publication metrics. For example, the Open University of Catalonia has changed assessment practices for post-doctoral researchers, but recruitment and career progression for professors are handled centrally at the Spanish and Catalan level and remain focused on publications. This creates a situation where career assessment practices are inconsistent between different career stages, and post-doctoral researchers at the institution have to hedge their bets to progress their career longer term. The University of Bath expressed a similar concern for early-career researchers who might become disadvantaged by the system when they seek future opportunities elsewhere.

The national consortia in the Netherlands and Norway are concerned by a potential “first-mover disadvantage” when changing to or further deepening career assessment practices that go against those that are more dominant internationally. Other institutions are less concerned about making the first move. The University of Nottingham Ningbo China was the first academic institution in China to sign DORA, in part to signal their leadership in this space. As part of their institutional change process, Tampere University in Finland sees their faculty becoming unofficial ambassadors of “good practice” in academic career assessment when they serve as external evaluators at other academic institutions.

External influences also inspire and drive forward some case studies in this collection. For example, the University of Bath and the Norwegian consortium refer to community-developed guidelines and decisions made by other stakeholders as having made a substantial contribution to their own initiatives. The University of Bath’s initiative was in part inspired by the Metric Tide and more recently by decisions made by the Wellcome Trust, a research funding organization in the United Kingdom, while the Norwegian consortium points to the example of the Dutch consortium and discussions within EUA advisory groups as inspiration for its own work. DORA was a key driver for the University of Nottingham Ningbo China.

How: processes and dynamics for developing, implementing, and managing change

Looking at “how” the case studies in this collection were first initiated and subsequently developed we start to find common pathways of change. For institutional-level cases, “bottom-up” means initiatives emerging from and driven by academic, library, or administrative staff working at the university, while “top-down” refers to actions taken by institutional leadership. For national-level cases, “bottom-up” means initiatives driven by academic stakeholders (e.g., universities, research institutes, research funding organizations, learned societies) and their representative bodies, while “top-down” refers to actions taken by national policymakers.

We have already considered how institutions and national consortia often draw on discussions taking place among their staff or in their country. This bottom-up dynamic is present in almost all cases, where a long process of informal contacts and leveraging existing networks builds up to practical outcomes. This happens at the institutional level, but the national consortia are especially relevant examples as they bring together a broad coalition of stakeholders to develop and implement initiatives with limited to no involvement from their governments. Indeed, all three consortia included in this report are distinctly bottom-up driven.

Nevertheless, top-down support from academic leadership in institutions and governments for national consortia plays an important part in the development of the case studies. For example, Ghent University shows how years of bottom-up discussions and initiatives can lay the groundwork for ambitious initiatives once academic leadership provides academic support. Other cases such as the University of Bath, the Open University of Catalonia, University of Nottingham Ningbo China, and University College London similarly talk about the dynamic between academic staff and leadership driving forward their initiatives. The national

consortia included in this collection all come from systems where the academic sector has a large degree of autonomy in academic career assessment, but even they mention the benefits of a supportive government welcoming their work.

Conclusion: supporting implementation

This report and the accompanying online repository have brought together case studies in responsible academic career assessment to inspire and identify emerging pathways of change. EUA, DORA, and SPARC Europe believe the findings on the “what,” “who,” “why,” and “how” of these institutional- and national-level initiatives are important and can help facilitate the transition toward implementation of responsible academic career assessment. However, this is an ongoing process that has much further to go. To conclude, we offer the following recommendations based on our previous work²⁸ that are supported by this collection of case studies.

Go for open, accurate, transparent, and responsible practices

Academic career assessment practices should become more open, accurate, transparent, and responsible. Key to meeting this goal is institutions developing and instilling their own standards and structure into assessment processes. However, balance is required in this endeavor: Too little structure permits uneven comparisons that propagate inequities in the academic workforce, but being overly prescriptive can lead to “gaming” of the system.

Academic career assessment reform is about taking away the narrow field of view and constraints placed on academics and institutions by publication-based metrics such as the JIF. The negative effects of such constraints are well-documented, notably the excessive pursuit of research that can be packaged in articles for high-ranking journals. Instead, institutions should take a big picture view toward researchers’ contributions.

However, more accurate, transparent, and responsible approaches to academic evaluation should not primarily or even necessarily aim to add more indicators, but rather seek to find dynamic, context-sensitive, and above all holistic approaches that allow researchers and universities the freedom to pursue/manage academic activities in any way they believe is most effective in service to society.

In reviewing and revising policies and practices, institutions must prioritize equity. Publication-based metrics, such as the JIF, often contribute to confirmation bias, status quo bias, and the Matthew Effect, all of which can lead to inequitable academic career assessment by allowing incumbent processes and perceptions to have the advantage.²⁹ New policies and practices should be stress tested for unintended consequences before being put in place. But institutions should also be flexible and provide opportunities to revisit and refine policies and practices as needed.

28 Most notably: Saenen, B., Morais, R., Gaillard, V., & Borrell-Damián, L. (2019). *Research Assessment in the Transition to Open Science. 2019 EUA Open Science and Access Survey Results*. Brussels: EUA, pp. 34-35. Retrieved 14 December 2020, from: <https://eua.eu/resources/publications/888:research-assessment-in-the-transition-to-open-science.html>; European University Association (2020). *Perspectives on the new European Research Area from the university sector*. Brussels: EUA, p. 16. Retrieved 14 December 2020, from: <https://eua.eu/resources/publications/949:perspectives-on-the-new-european-research-area-from-the-university-sector.html>; Hatch, A. & Schmidt, R. (2020). *Rethinking Research Assessment: Ideas for Action*. DORA. Retrieved 13 December 2020, from: <https://sfdora.org/resource/rethinking-research-assessment/>; Hatch, A. & Curry, S. (2020). *Research Culture: Changing how we evaluate research is difficult, but not impossible*. eLife 2020;9:e58654. Retrieved 6 November 2020, from: <https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.58654>.

29 Hatch, A. & Schmidt, R. (2020). *Rethinking Research Assessment: Unintended Cognitive and System Biases*. DORA. Retrieved 13 December 2020, from: <https://sfdora.org/resource/rethinking-research-assessment-unintended-cognitive-and-systems-biases/>.

Focus on raising awareness, community engagement, and building capacity

Raising awareness, community engagement, and building capacity are key to expand the range of academic activities that are being incentivized and rewarded, and to move to a less limited set of evaluation practices. To ensure that new policies become embedded in academic culture, institutions should foster personal accountability in faculty and staff. Short-term objectives to move away from assessment practices based on quantitative publication metrics and longer-term goals to improve the academic culture at an institution or in a national system will have to start with support and guidance for academic staff unsure about the effects of this transition on their careers, as well as developing more responsible practices that can take the place of deeply flawed, but familiar and easy to use publication metrics.

Aim for institutional initiatives backed by a concerted approach

Improving academic career assessment is a shared responsibility and requires a systems approach uniting the main actors. Researchers, universities, research institutes, research funders, and policymakers will have to work together to develop and implement more accurate, transparent, and responsible approaches. Both within a national system and seen from an international perspective, concerted approaches help to minimize the impact on academic staff as they navigate potential inconsistencies and tensions between new initiatives and more traditional approaches to academic career assessment.

Those reviewing academic career assessment each have their own role to play. Institutions are well-placed to explore new and innovative approaches to academic evaluation that are tailored to their diverse internal drivers and external pressures. Consortia with other academic actors, including research funders, learned academies, and policymakers, are essential to coordinate and support academic career assessment reform on the national, regional, and global level. Finally, these case studies have also shown the role individuals play in this process: academic leaders, support staff and members of the academic community, including early-stage researchers, are all able to initiate and build momentum for change and all these levels.



Universities

Institutional-level cases

- ◆ Ghent University (Belgium)
- ◆ Open University of Catalonia (Catalonia)
- ◆ University of Bath (United Kingdom)
- ◆ University College London (United Kingdom)
- ◆ University Medical Center Utrecht (The Netherlands)
- ◆ University of Nottingham Ningbo China (People's Republic of China)
- ◆ Tampere University (Finland)



Ghent University

In response to an institutional culture that had become overly reliant on quantitative indicators for research assessment, and from a desire to promote a less competitive academic environment with a renewed focus on collaboration, Ghent University developed a new conceptual framework for research evaluation that is guided by eight principles. The process for change at Ghent University was initiated on multiple levels, and concrete administrative actions were propelled by feedback from faculty and researchers. Policy development is a shared responsibility between the institution's Research Department and Personnel Department (HR). In 2016, Ghent University adopted a Vision Statement for evaluating research at Ghent University. In 2018, the university introduced a new career and evaluation policy for professorial staff. HR played a significant role in developing a new perspective on career assessment and implementing new instruments. In October 2020, the university's Board of Governors approved a policy brief to further develop the university's research assessment policy.

WHO: Organization profile

- **Country:** Belgium
- **Profile of institution:** Comprehensive university or equivalent
- **Number of FTE researchers:** > 1,000
- **Organization of research evaluation:** institutional/university level
- **Who is involved?** academic leadership, academic researchers, policy staff, research department staff, HR department staff, research support or management staff

WHAT: What changed and the key elements of change

In response to an institutional culture that had become reliant on quantitative indicators for research assessment, and from a desire to promote an academic environment that was less competitive and more collaborative, Ghent University developed a new conceptual framework on research assessment. Their approach, outlined in a Vision Statement in 2016,¹ helps to:

1. Strike the right balance between indicator-driven and peer-review-driven assessment methods.
2. Guarantee that each of these methods is properly applied.
3. Build sufficient flexibility into the system.

The framework can be applied to the evaluation of individuals, research groups, or by the University's special research fund and is guided by eight principles.² To help implement the new framework, and in response to feedback and concerns from academic staff, Ghent developed guidelines for using indicators in the evaluation of research.³

In October 2018, building on the framework, Ghent University introduced a new career and evaluation policy for professorial staff.⁴ The policy specifies that evaluations will occur every five years, as imposed by national law, which is less frequent than before, and will "focus on talent-oriented support and coaching of the professorial staff in the different phases of their career. To do so, a personalized HR committee has been set up for each professor."⁴ These committees support and challenge personal and professional growth, give

CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

feedback and, eventually, evaluate the professor. Under the new policy, the evaluation process includes (among others) narrative self-reflections. Professors are asked to reflect on their most significant achievements and to describe their ambitions for the next five years. They do so within four pillars: (i) research, (ii) teaching, (iii) institution and societal engagement, and (iv) leadership and people management.

WHY: Motivation for change

Researchers and faculty, as well as the university leaders, noticed a growing systemic research culture problem. The quantitative evaluation models contributed, for instance, to a culture of “publish or perish” and were unable to properly grasp the opportunities afforded by new approaches such as interdisciplinary research. This led to a wider debate about the evaluation of research.

The previous career model for professors was criticized as a mainly output-driven process that focused on measuring people’s performance by counting their achievements through quantitative indicators (publications and citations in high-impact journals, etc.). Much emphasis was put on a priori defined individualized targets. The system also put a high administrative burden on the professors and faculty staff, with a lot of paperwork to fill in, at a high evaluation frequency. All this resulted in increasing competition between academics, higher work pressure, and growing dissatisfaction.

Leadership decided not to wait for other institutions to enact change and began to create a system where the desired values were emphasized in career progression and academic evaluation policies.

The dynamic for change at Ghent University was mainly top-down. University leaders wanted to change the culture to create a new one with a shared understanding of what research excellence should encompass: high quality research and teaching, academic freedom, increased societal impact, improved wellbeing, and supporting Open Science and research integrity.

The aim was to create a challenging, high-quality, and stimulating career framework for professors. When the moment of evaluation (and thus promotion) comes, Ghent University no longer looks at the academic output alone. Instead, the university takes a more qualitative, integrated, and talent-oriented perspective.

The basic idea was to introduce a system that takes a more holistic approach to researchers’ careers, opening up ways to foster and reward vision development on long-term ambitions (at the individual and group level), collaboration, and connections to the larger group.

HOW: Processes and dynamics for developing, implementing, and managing change

Institutional change at Ghent University was initiated at multiple levels: concrete administrative actions were propelled by feedback from faculty and researchers. Administrators from the Personnel Department (HR) and the Research Department were involved in developing the new processes, as research assessment is a shared responsibility between the Research Department and HR. HR plays a crucial role in assessment at Ghent University, and championed and implemented the new policies.

The 2016 Vision Statement was drafted on the Research Council’s initiative and was approved by the university’s Board of Governors.¹ Change at Ghent University has been a continuous dialogue and iterative process to translate new perspectives on the evaluation of research into the university’s research and evaluation policy as well as in the assessment and appraisal procedures organized by the university.



Obstacles faced to change the assessment systems included limited awareness of research assessment reform and its potential benefits; lack of evidence on potential benefits of research assessment reform; resistance to research assessment reform from researchers; lack of institutional capacity (e.g., skilled staff, support structures); and alignment of institution assessment procedures with nationally and internationally dominant procedures.

To increase the engagement of the research community, the new policies and practices were accompanied by training sessions, engagement, and discussion with faculty and researchers. This helped increase the awareness of the potential benefits of assessment reform, and mitigate the insecurities and resistance that arose as a result of the changes. Templates for the various reports required under the new policy, as well as portfolios of academic activities in the four dimensions (research, education, people management, and leadership, and institutional and societal engagement, are made available to support professorial staff.⁵ Some professors did feel a bit insecure about how to deal with the qualitative character of the career evaluations and the fact that they have to talk openly about their long-term ambitions and performance (instead of using the measurable, quantitative criteria for evaluation). However, feedback shows that the professors actually enjoy the open feedback culture and that they feel supported by the HR committee.

WHEN: Timeline and history of development and implementation

Ghent University has been working continuously on its evaluation culture since 2013. Internal dialogue and debate between relevant stakeholders, e.g., within the Research Council, and between the Research and HR Department, produced the principles and criteria for the evaluation of research.

In November 2016, the Board of Governors approved the Vision Statement for Evaluation Research at Ghent University, which introduced the eight principles that must guide every evaluation of research.¹ The guidelines for the use of indicators in the evaluation of research were published in 2017, coinciding with the start of the Research Policy Plan 2017-2021.⁶

In 2018, Ghent University opted for a radically new evaluation and promotion model for professors.⁴ The process was designed in part to give “responsibility” and academic freedom back to the professorial staff. The basic idea is that organizational trust and academic freedom works best if people also take up responsibility in return. Ghent University has found that this requires additional support and created personalized HR committees for each professor.

In October 2020, the university’s Board of Governors approved a policy brief to further develop the university’s research assessment policy. The implementation of the new evaluation and assessment culture is still ongoing.

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Open University of Catalonia

The Open University of Catalonia (UOC) shifted the focus of their assessment criteria and practices for recruitment and career progression away from journal-based outputs to a much broader discussion of achievements. Due to the centralization of career progression for faculty nationally, the new assessment criteria apply to postdoctoral fellows and UOC research staff, not professorial staff. Because the history and academic culture at UOC are rooted in Open Knowledge¹, there were several internal drivers to push career progression and recruitment evaluations to promote open scholarship. After initial advocacy by researchers and staff at UOC, the Research and Innovation Committee, chaired by the Vice President for Research, created a DORA task force, which published the university's DORA action plan online in 2018.²

WHO: Organization profile

- **Country:** Catalonia (Spain)
- **Profile of institution:** Distance learning university
- **Number of FTE researchers:** 500 – 1,000
- **Organization of research evaluation:** institution/university level; research unit levels
- **Who is involved?** academic leadership; academic researchers

WHAT: What changed and the key elements of change

After the publication of the DORA Action Plan, the university is working toward changing their assessment criteria for career progression and recruitment practices.² Faculty recruitment and career progression align with the three central university missions: teaching, research, and the so-called “third mission,” which is related to societal interactions and impacts.

The change from journal-based metrics to a narrative discussion of “achievements” is currently in effect for postdoctoral recruitment. Examples of achievements include a paper, group of papers, research project, a patent, and more. Under the new criteria, “increasing importance is given to research content and its social impact, rather than just its appearance in various journals and metrics.” With the changes proposed within the Action Plan, UOC aims to transform “evaluation methods using more qualitative, transparent, fair, inclusive and socially relevant formulas that take into consideration not only research quality, but also the societal impact of our research.”³

For the recruitment of research group leaders (full-time researchers at UOC who are not professors), a specific international Scientific Advisory Board analyzes the applicant's CV and research plan by means of a written proposal and a public presentation. Assessment for the career progression of research group leaders takes place every four years with the advisory board producing a qualitative evaluation report.

Professors are assessed by the Dean, Vice Rector for Teaching, Vice Rector for Research—as well as the Rector in case of promotion to full professor—together with two or three professors. Assessment is, therefore, peer-reviewed, but journal-based metrics still play a role because UOC is highly dependent on the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency professor accreditation system, which is mainly based on publications and journal impact factor. However, this governmental agency has recently signed DORA and future changes are expected.

CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

WHY: Motivation for change

The history and academic culture at UOC is rooted in Open Science. As such, there were several internal drivers to push career progression and recruitment evaluations to be more open. Identifying ways to recognize and reward the social impact of research was also a major motivation for change. “Much of the impact of research cannot be explained or assessed with quantitative indicators, instead it requires a report.”

While UOC has autonomy in decisions regarding postdoctoral recruitment and promotion, the major barrier for the implementation of new academic assessment practices at the faculty level is the centralized external accreditation system for faculty career progression.

Because journal-based metrics are still commonly used to measure academic success at other institutions, there were also some concerns about the new approach to assessment. For example, would it disadvantage UOC doctoral and postdoctoral populations for future academic opportunities?

Instead of creating meaningful culture change, another concern is the risk of creating a “check the box” exercise; early career researchers may see the new assessment criteria as something they need to comply with before moving on to careers based on quantitative publication metrics (e.g., professorial staff).

HOW: Processes and dynamics for developing, implementing, and managing change

After initial advocacy by researchers and staff at UOC, the Research and Innovation Committee, chaired by the Vice President for Research, created a DORA task force. This combined bottom-up/top-down approach facilitated the necessary dialogue and advocacy in linking open science with research assessment reform. The DORA Action Plan created by the task force is part of the wider Open Knowledge Access Plan at UOC.²

The task force was pivotal for capacity building, in terms of both defining achievements and for designing rubrics to guide evaluators. It was also critical for advocacy and community engagement to help explain the new process and ensure that evaluation would be consistent in the absence of journal-based metrics. Importantly, the task force stopped short of giving achievement examples. In the action plan, the task force states:

*It is vital to provide **spaces for discussion** to reflect on assessment practices and practices that help to create **knowledge and awareness** between UOC researchers about new research assessment models and the DORA Declaration. In addition, **training sessions** should be offered on how to demonstrate the impacts of research beyond metrics.²*

Specific obstacles faced were: absence of incentivizing policies or guidelines from external actors (e.g., national/regional governments, research funding organizations); alignment of institutional assessment procedures with nationally and internationally dominant procedures; and lack of institutional autonomy due to national/regional rules and regulations.

WHEN: Timeline and history of development and implementation

The DORA task force was created by the Research and Innovation Committee in early 2018. The task force presented the “UOC signs the San Francisco Declaration (DORA) Action Plan” in December 2018. The progress on action items for open science and assessment is currently ongoing.



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University of Bath

The University of Bath released its “Principles of research assessment and management” in 2017.¹ The Principles were designed to “encapsulate current good practice and to act as a guide for future activities” across all disciplines and performance indicators at the university. In this way, the Principles articulate the existing culture at the university. In developing and distributing the Principles, there was a combined top-down/bottom-up dynamic through a partnership between the Library and the Research and Innovation Services staff, with senior leadership provided by the Pro Vice Chancellor for Research.

WHO: Organization profile

- **Country:** United Kingdom
- **Profile of institution:** comprehensive university or equivalent
- **Number of FTE researchers:** > 1000
- **Organization of research evaluation:** institution/university level; faculty/department levels; research unit levels
- **Who is involved?** Academic leadership; academic researchers; library staff; policy staff; research support or management staff; HR staff; international relations staff

WHAT: What changed and the key elements of change

The university developed “Principles of research assessment and management” to formalize good practices of evaluation at the University of Bath.¹ While the Principles do not represent a new approach for the university, or even a break with the past, they articulate the existing campus culture in order to deepen and strengthen it.

To create the Principles, a diverse “task and finish” working group was created, chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor for Research. Group members were purposeful in their design, looking for principles that could be applied broadly across disciplines. Moreover, the principles have a practical use in reinforcing cultural norms, in that faculty and staff can refer to them to challenge instances of bad practices

Development of the statement of principles was prompted by the Metric Tide (2015)² and the Leiden Manifesto (2015)³. The Principles establish “expert judgement” as the basis for research assessment:

Criteria and/or indicators used must be carefully chosen in light of the purpose of the assessment and context. Where appropriate, quantitative indicators can be used to inform judgements and challenge preconceptions, but not to replace expert judgement.

Recognizing there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to responsible research assessment, the Principles highlight the need for more tailored approaches, as “disciplinary differences in research inputs, processes and outputs have to be taken into account.” The Principles also explicitly state that the scale of the research activity must be considered, and “particular caution is needed when interpreting quantitative indicators in small scale assessments such as the assessment of an individual researcher.”

The task and finish working group included plans to review the Principles. So in 2018, a year after their release, a follow-up survey was conducted to assess the awareness and utility of the statement of Principles. The survey results highlighted good understanding of the relevance of the Principles and a need for continual promotion of the Principles. The group disbanded after achieving its goal of developing and distributing the Principles.

University of Bath is currently looking in more detail at assessment of academic staff and researchers.



WHY: Motivation for change

The purpose of the Principles was to articulate the existing culture at the university.¹ However, the process also drew inspiration from external influences.

For example, one impetus for the statement of principles was the publication of the Metric Tide in 2015². While this external event may have started the process, several other internal drivers, including the need to raise awareness and reinforce a responsible academic culture, was largely responsible for driving change. Similarly, the motivation for future and ongoing assessment reform is to consolidate and demonstrate the University's commitment to good practice in research evaluation.

When discussing limitations, it was noted that while the broad openness of the statement of Principles “helped achieve [bottom-up] buy-in,” a significant remaining challenge is to develop specific guidelines that are flexible enough for academics in different disciplines and career stages. Another challenge is the concern for assessment portability and ensuring that the university's researchers are not disadvantaged. In particular, there is a concern for early career researchers, who may not be evaluated the same way at other institutions.

HOW: Processes and dynamics for developing, implementing, and managing change

In developing and distributing the Principles, there was a combined top-down/bottom-up dynamic.¹ The development of the Principles was initiated in 2015 by a partnership between the Library and the Research and Innovation Services staff, with senior leadership provided by the Pro Vice Chancellor for Research.

The University formed a working group in 2016, which was responsible for the development, initial implementation, and review of the “Principles of research assessment and management.” The Principles were deliberately developed with a broad acceptance in mind, and the staffing of the working group “was quite deliberate” in order to maintain interest and support from all levels and disciplines. The Principles had more credibility as a result of the initial buy-in from senior leadership.

Specific obstacles faced were: limited awareness of research assessment reform and its potential benefits; lack of evidence on potential benefits of research assessment reform; complexity of research assessment reform (e.g., different national and disciplinary practices); alignment of institutional assessment procedures with nationally and internationally dominant procedures; lack of institutional autonomy due to national/regional rules and regulations; and lack of institutional autonomy due to rules and regulations imposed by research funding organizations.

WHEN: Timeline and history of development and implementation

After the publication of Metric Tide in 2015,² the University agreed to set up a working group to develop institutional Principles.¹ In 2016 the working group drafted the statement of Principles and a distribution plan. The statement was approved by the Senate in February 2017 and published online in March 2017.

In July 2018, working group members reconvened to review the dissemination of the institution's Principles. They also introduced explicit mechanisms for reporting concerns about activities not conforming to the Principles.

The next step is to review practices for the assessment of academic staff and researchers.

CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

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University College London

University College London (UCL) has developed several new responsible research development and assessment policies: the Academic Careers Framework (2018) and the Responsible Use of Bibliometrics at UCL (2020). These policies were prompted by internal motivations, which included a wish to create a culture that embraces Open Science practices at the university. One of the goals was to define and codify the concepts of academic “excellence” and “quality” in an Open Science environment. The dynamic for change was initiated in a “top-down” fashion by the Vice-Provost (Research) and Pro-Vice-Provost (Library Services), but with extensive consultation with, and buy-in from, the larger academic community.

WHO: Organization profile

- **Country:** United Kingdom
- **Profile of institution:** Comprehensive university or equivalent
- **Number of FTE researchers:** > 1,000
- **Organization of research evaluation:** institutional/university level, faculty/department levels, research unit levels
- **Who is involved?** academic leadership, policy staff, research department staff, research support or management staff, library staff

WHAT: What changed and the key elements of change

University College London (UCL) has two new responsible research development and assessment policies: the Academic Careers Framework¹ and Responsible use of bibliometrics at UCL.²

Approved in 2018, UCL’s Academic Careers Framework was designed as a versatile tool to support career progression. While the framework can be used by researchers looking to build a case for promotion, it is also a resource for those assessing promotion cases. The framework seeks to ensure that personal impact is evaluated consistently across the university. To do that, it establishes core and specialized criteria and activities across disciplines and grades. The framework also includes examples of “Indicators of Impact” to be used during career assessments.

In 2020 UCL’s Academic Committee approved a responsible use of bibliometrics policy, which “aims to balance the benefits and limitations of bibliometric use to create a framework for the responsible use of bibliometrics at UCL.”² The policy is based on 11 principles for the responsible use of bibliometrics, and the principles are founded on UCL’s “commitment to valuing research and researchers based on their own merits, not the merits of metrics.”² These documents are not yet comprehensive; UCL views them as part of a growing body of material to improve academic development and assessment processes.

WHY: Motivation for change

Internal discussions among faculty and staff about improving academic culture by embracing Open Science ultimately helped lead to the development of new policies at UCL. One of the goals was to describe and codify the concepts of academic “excellence” and “quality” in an Open Science environment.

At the same time external factors, such as the European Commission’s support for Open Science and the national academic assessment exercise in the United Kingdom, the Research Excellence Framework (REF),

CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

prompted further reflection that drove UCL to respond to the internal discussions about Open Science and academic culture that were happening on campus.

In addition to promoting Open Science principles, the Academic Careers Framework was developed to facilitate better recognition and rewards that promote the university's wider ambitions for research, education, and innovation. The Framework "seeks to describe and codify the types of activity that may feature within an academic career, at an individual grade, and across grades over time."¹

The bibliometrics policy was created, in part, to provide guidance for the appropriate and responsible use of bibliometrics. Another motivation for the bibliometrics policy was to establish equity and fairness by creating a policy that is "deliberately broad and flexible to take account of the diversity of context."²

According to survey results no significant barriers were identified in implementing this policy, because the new policies mirrored requirements in the REF.

HOW: Processes and dynamics for developing, implementing, and managing change

The dynamic for change at UCL was stimulated at the top with the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) initiating the Academic Careers Framework¹ and the Pro-Vice-Provost (Library Services) leading the development of the Bibliometrics policy². However, development of both policies involved extensive consultation with, and buy-in from, the larger academic community.

The Pro-Vice-Provost (Library Services) was appointed in 2018 as an independent leader to promote Open Science in the university. The establishment of the open access UCL Press in 2015 and the UCL Research Data Repository in 2019 demonstrated that Open Science solutions could be delivered for the university. The success of UCL Press is also perceived as having made faculty members more willing to discuss new Open Science approaches.

Task and finish working groups contributed to the development of the Academic Careers Framework and Bibliometrics policy. Specifically, the Bibliometrics policy at UCL was created through extensive and iterative rounds of consultation and revision. The working group engaged with the UCL community in several different ways: direct consultation (in person and in writing), hosting department-specific meetings, surveys, and town halls. Coalition-building across departments was essential, but it also required significant time and energy. The Pro-Vice-Provost (Library Services) and his team arranged in-person meetings with around 50 of the 72 departments to identify specific barriers to research assessment reform and determine what other modes of evaluation they would prefer.

WHEN: Timeline and history of development and implementation

The Academic Careers Framework took two years to complete and was released in 2018. A draft version of the Responsible Use of Bibliometrics at UCL policy was produced in 2017 and circulated among the Bibliometrics Working Group. This draft was revised and updated during 2018 and presented to the UCL community at a town-hall session in December 2018.³ The policy was revised according to feedback from the town hall before a more extensive consultation process began.

Throughout spring and summer 2019 the working group continued to consult with university departments. The policy then went through constant revision. The entire process took approximately 2 years. The final policy was presented to and approved by the UCL Academic Committee in February 2020.



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CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

University Medical Center Utrecht

University Medical Center (UMC) Utrecht changed its approach to academic assessment through the development and implementation of a new evaluation framework. The purpose of the framework is to move beyond bibliometrics-based evaluations; it formally requires qualitative indicators and a descriptive portfolio when making hiring and promotion decisions. While change was stimulated at the top by the Dean of Research, faculty members provided input into the development of new evaluation criteria. In 2019, UMC Utrecht published the results and outcomes of their new research evaluation approach, reviewing the period 2013-2018.

UMC Utrecht carried out their evaluation under the flag of the national research evaluation plan, anticipating and adding to changes (e.g., emphasizing Open Science practices) that the Association of Universities in the Netherlands will introduce in 2021. From that date all universities in the Netherlands will emphasize Open Science in their periodic research evaluations according to the Strategy Evaluation Protocol.

WHO: Organization profile

- **Country:** The Netherlands
- **Profile of institution:** Specialized university or equivalent
- **Number of FTE researchers:** >1,000
- **Organization of research evaluation:** faculty/department levels; institutional/university level
- **Who is involved?** academic leadership, academic researchers, policy staff

WHAT: What changed and the key elements of change

UMC Utrecht changed their evaluation framework at multiple levels: institutionally, and for faculty and PhD candidates. In addition, changes were made to the evaluation procedure itself. This framework, a locally adapted version of the national Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP), can be used to judge groups or teams, not just individuals.

- At the institutional level, research was organized in trans-divisional and multidisciplinary disease-based programs where the evaluation of research was focused on scientific output in relation to patient stakeholders and societal impact.
- At the level of individual faculty, UMC Utrecht replaced CVs with portfolios for promotion decisions. Within the portfolio, applicants are asked to discuss achievements in relation to five UMC Utrecht mission-based domains.
- At the level of PhD candidates, UMC Utrecht developed and implemented annual evaluation forms that make visible a broad range of possible predoctoral accomplishments.¹

As part of this reformed evaluation framework, UMC Utrecht formally requires and enforces consideration of qualitative indicators and a descriptive portfolio in order to broaden the discussion around each candidate.

WHY: Motivation for change

The purpose of the reform was to “create policies that ensured individual researchers would be judged on their actual contributions and not to the counts of the publications” and to encourage “research programmes [...] geared towards creating societal impact and not just scientific excellence.”² As UMC Utrecht is a university



medical center (UMC), there was also early discussion regarding the “mismatch between the mission of UMCs and the incentive and reward system for researchers.”³

HOW: Processes and dynamics for developing, implementing, and managing change

Change at UMC Utrecht was “stimulated at the top” but the “criteria were influenced by the faculty members who expect to be judged by those standards.”² Academic assessment is now under the jurisdiction of the Research Office and Human Resources.

Before the formal policy changes at UMC Utrecht, informal discussions about the state of science were organized by a group called Science in Transition (SIT). The group was formed by four senior researchers, one of whom was the Dean of Research. SIT began holding workshops attended by diverse populations of researchers at UMC Utrecht, ranging from PhD students to department heads.

The workshops opened up topics for discussion that led to the development of new academic assessment policies. For example, participants questioned the fact that dominant measures of research quality applied to all of the disciplines in the center and debated whether all research papers should be counted and valued equally in evaluations. Having top-down support from the Dean was instrumental in early efforts to promote reform discussion and visibility of the policy development process. Additionally, top-down support made room for the evolution of attitudes toward the new evaluation framework.

An autonomous committee of 15 mid-career scientists and clinicians then came up with a revised definition of excellence and new evaluation policies.⁴ Using the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) as a guide, the committee developed a “suite of semi-qualitative indicators that include conventional outcome measurements, evaluations of leadership and citizenship across UMC Utrecht and other communities, as well as assessments of structure and process, such as how research questions are formed and results disseminated.”¹

Specific obstacles faced were: resistance to research assessment reform from researchers; absence of incentivizing policies or guidelines (e.g., national/regional governments, research funding organizations); and alignment of institutional assessment procedures with nationally and internationally dominant procedures.

WHEN: Timeline and history of development and implementation

Science in Transition (SIT) was formed in 2012 by a group of researchers invested in the creation of a better research culture. In 2013, SIT hosted workshops and published a position paper in which they concluded that “bibliometrics were overemphasized and societal impact was undervalued.”⁵

In two successive institutional research evaluations in 2013 and 2019, UMC Utrecht increasingly emphasized societal impact and Open Science. The portfolio to facilitate the evaluation of professors and associate professors was introduced from 2016 onward. A new PhD evaluation form has been under development since 2019.

Further and deeper analysis of the impact of the new evaluation framework is underway in collaboration with the Centre for Science and Technology Studies at Leiden University. Going forward, UMC Utrecht will adhere to the new national evaluation framework, the Strategy Evaluation Procedure, effective 2021-2027 across The Netherlands.⁶

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University of Nottingham Ningbo China

The University of Nottingham is a global university, with campuses in the United Kingdom, the People's Republic of China, and Malaysia. In 2019, the University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC) signed DORA and committed to the implementation of DORA principles through the establishment of an Implementation Task Force. Change was stimulated in part by the desire to emphasize the values-driven culture at UNNC. The dynamic of change at UNNC is a combination of top-down (i.e., university management) and bottom-up (i.e., Library, faculty, and research staff), but with each dynamic taking over periodically, rather than occurring simultaneously. The university is analyzing current practices for alignment with DORA principles and developing recommendations for change through formal consultations across all relevant institutional stakeholders, including departmental faculties, the Library, and Human Resources.

WHO: Organization profile

- **Country:** People's Republic of China
- **Profile of institution:** comprehensive university or equivalent
- **Number of FTE researchers:** 500-1,000
- **Organization of research evaluation:** institutional/university level, faculty/department levels, research unit levels
- **Who is involved?** academic leadership, academic researchers, library staff

WHAT: What changed and the key elements of change

The University of Nottingham is a global university, with campuses in the United Kingdom, the People's Republic of China, and Malaysia. In 2019, the University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC) signed DORA and committed to fair and responsible research assessment practices through its establishment of an Implementation Task Force for DORA.

The main goal of this task force is to make recommendations to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and Management Board to ensure responsible research assessment indicators are reflected in relevant university processes and activities, and to raise awareness of DORA and its principles. Other functions of the task force include establishing a process for the ongoing embedding and tracking of DORA's principles in recruitment and academic promotion.

WHY: Motivation for change

Internal and external drivers motivated the adoption of DORA recommendations and formation of the Implementation Task Force. Internal drivers are rooted in the values-driven culture at UNNC, which aligns with DORA principles. The Implementation Task Force expressed a desire to promote a university culture with particular focus on research quality, impact, leadership, teaching and learning, and responsible authorship practices.

External drivers included DORA (2013)¹, the Leiden Manifesto (2015)², and Metric Tide (2015)³, and the increasing global discussion on the problematic use of publication-based proxy indicators for academic assessment.

CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

Another motivation was to increase institutional visibility and momentum for change, consistent with University of Nottingham's Global People Strategy 2020.⁴ There was an opportunity for UNNC to be the first university in China to sign DORA. UNNC's signature demonstrates their commitment to international best practices in research assessment.

HOW: Processes and dynamics for developing, implementing, and managing change

The dynamic of change at UNNC is both top-down (i.e., university management) and bottom-up (i.e., Library, faculty, and research staff), but with each dynamic taking over periodically, rather than occurring simultaneously (e.g., a rollercoaster-like dynamic). The advantage of this dynamic is the genuine buy-in at all levels, facilitating broad support for advocacy.

A major obstacle was the diversity of schools within the university, and the difference in reliance on publication-based proxy indicators for assessment (e.g., international business school assessments). Informal consultation about assessment started with the Library, which led workshops convening representatives from Professional Services (Strategy and Planning, The Library, Human Resources, Research Office, Faculty administration), and Faculties (Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, Research Ethics Committee).

Because the Library is perceived as a neutral body on campus at UNNC, it was ideally situated for the outreach and coalition building that is needed to establish support for change across university faculties. Furthermore, the neutrality of the Library fostered the dual leverage of institutional and subject-matter expertise in bibliometrics, which was critical for establishing credibility.

A formal consultation process followed after sufficient time for Library-led advocacy efforts to establish a broad institutional buy-in. As such, the Library then proposed the creation of an Implementation Task Force. The task force was formed under the authority of the Vice Provost for Research and staffed by members of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, principally the Faculty Directors of Research.

The task force then decentralized the process to each of the three faculties (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Science and Engineering, Faculty of Business). Faculty directors consulted each faculty body to analyze current practices for alignment with DORA. Internal reports were created for each faculty with recommendations for change. This formal consultation with the faculties identified three key areas of interest: promotions, recruitment, and performance review. Each of the faculties have produced specific recommendations for these areas. The general implementations suggested promote more diverse and holistic academic assessment. While some of the recommendations are being put in practice, others require further consultation with Human Resources before implementation.

The global nature of University of Nottingham is of critical importance; internal discussions at UNNC regarding assessment reform are being held within the larger context of the global university. This context includes the United Kingdom's Research Excellence Framework (REF), a national instrument where research income is closely tied to the rigorous assessment of the research of higher education institutions within the United Kingdom.

Specific obstacles faced were: limited awareness of research assessment reform and its potential benefits; lack of evidence on potential benefits of research assessment reform; resistance to reform from academic leadership; resistance to research assessment reform from researchers; lack of institutional capacity (e.g., skilled staff, support structures); lack of coordination among the relevant actors within the institution;



absence of incentivizing policies or guidelines from external actors (e.g., national/regional governments, research funding organizations); alignment of institutional assessment procedures with nationally and internationally dominant procedures; and lack of institutional autonomy due to national/regional rules and regulations.

WHEN: Timeline and history of development and implementation

The seven research councils in the United Kingdom signed DORA in February 2018, followed by a number of other UK institutions, notably the University of Nottingham.

In September 2018, the Library delivered two workshops at UNNC. Informal consultation with institutional stakeholders began.

The Library submitted recommendations to the University's Management Board in December 2018 to sign DORA and to establish a working group. In June 2019 the UNNC Management Board approved the creation of a local Research Assessment task force with the support of the Vice Provost for Research.

Faculties have analyzed current practices for alignment with DORA and made recommendations for change. Next steps involve formal consultations with Professional Services (Human Resources) on the Faculties' recommendations.

The Library introduced an informal self-evaluation "DORA Assessment Implementation" checklist in 2020. Formal consultations and implementation of responsible academic assessment efforts are ongoing.

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Tampere University

Tampere University is a new Finnish institution, formed in 2019 from the merger of the University of Tampere and the Tampere University of Technology. As a result of the merger, Tampere recognized it had a unique opportunity to redesign its policies to implement a fair and responsible model for faculty hiring, promotion, and tenure. External factors also influenced Tampere's decision to critically examine the ways research and researchers are assessed; the Academy of Finland, a large governmental funding body in Finland, signed DORA in 2019.¹

The dynamic for change at the university is largely top-down. The tenure-track model was prepared by the Human Resources Department, in consultation with university leadership (Provost, Vice Presidents, and Deans), and final approval was given by the university Academic Board. While the actions were top-down, the process for change was stimulated through bottom-up feedback from academic researchers. The new hiring and promotion models are now in place, and Tampere is gathering feedback from the university community with the aim to make additional improvements as needed.

WHO: Organization profile

- **Country:** Finland
- **Profile of institution:** comprehensive university or equivalent
- **Number of FTE researchers:** > 1,000
- **Further information:**
- **Organization of research evaluation:** institutional/university level, faculty/department levels, research unit levels
- **Who is involved?** academic leadership, policy staff, research department staff, research support or management staff

WHAT: What changed and the key elements of change

Tampere University is a new Finnish institution, and the second largest university in Finland. It was formed from the merger of the University of Tampere and the Tampere University of Technology in 2019. Because of this, Tampere University has the unique opportunity to design and implement a fair and responsible model for hiring and promotion.

Tampere is using DORA principles as a starting point for creating their new system. While the work is ongoing, careful attention has been paid to creation of job announcements and calls for faculty applications. In addition, Tampere is establishing review guidelines for applications as well as advice on establishing application review guidelines. As such, current faculty recruitment policies emphasize fair and equitable evaluation practices with appropriate and flexible assessment methods.²

Tampere is gathering feedback from its academic community with an aim to make additional improvements. Future and more comprehensive evaluation policies and practices are in development, with a focus to specify career progression and research quality.



WHY: Motivation for change

The formation of Tampere University involved the merger of two university cultures. As such, the merger was a window of opportunity to implement a new fair and responsible assessment system.

Changes at Tampere were externally motivated in part by the commitment of the Academy of Finland, a large governmental funding body in Finland, to responsible academic assessment. The funding model under the Ministry of Education and Culture has shifted away from quantitative proxy-based indicators toward a model that also includes more qualitative criteria. University leaders at Tampere used this funding shift, as well as the Academy of Finland's signing of DORA in 2019, as leverage to stimulate local change.

The desire to be more transparent about evaluation criteria, specifically the indicators used for hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions, was a key internal motivator to reimagine academic assessment at Tampere. But change was also driven by the overarching desire to promote a responsible research culture on campus.

One major obstacle is the use of external evaluators for hiring and promotion decisions. While the instructions are to follow responsible evaluation practices, and explicitly articulate Tampere's commitment to DORA principles, many external reviewers have trouble understanding these practices and instead are submitting application reports based on quantitative indicators or that emphasize publication venues. Tampere is addressing this challenge by providing instructions and guidelines for evaluators on what and how they should be evaluating applications for hiring and promotion.

One positive result of Tampere's commitment to fair and responsible evaluation is the ongoing discussion centered around the question "What does responsible research assessment look like?" This discussion, and the resulting increased awareness of responsible evaluation practices among its faculties, hopefully guides Tampere's researchers to act as "good practice" ambassadors when they are involved in external review for other institutions.

HOW: Processes and dynamics for developing, implementing, and managing change

The dynamic for change at Tampere is largely top-down: the universities that came together to forge the new institution had different tenure-track models, so a unified one was needed. The tenure-track model was prepared by HR personnel before the university merger, in consultation with various bodies of the previous universities, including scientific councils, and with final approval by the university Academic Board. While the actions were top-down, the process for adding guidelines for fair evaluation was stimulated through messages from academic staff and external signals from the Academy of Finland on responsible assessment.

Even though the evaluation system changes and implementation of DORA principles were broadly accepted, there were observed difficulties in actualizing change on campus due to old and entrenched systems. For example, the evaluation of research "quality" in Finland has been based on a publication classification system initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture that links funding to publication venues. While this system was not designed to evaluate individual researchers, it has been misused in hiring and promotion decisions for individual researchers. Now Tampere is informing and training evaluators across campus about responsible evaluation. They also provide instructions and descriptions for external evaluators on how to implement fair and responsible assessment, in accordance with DORA principles.

CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

Additionally, Tampere has recognized the need for alignment between the call for applications and the evaluation criteria. To create this alignment, evaluators must “think ahead” and determine what they are looking for and how they will evaluate applicants before posting job announcements.

Ongoing efforts are centered around gathering feedback with the aim to make improvements. Additional plans are to expand the responsible hiring and promotion practices to all academic staff (e.g., lecturers and senior researcher positions).

Future efforts will expand the evaluation system to include research assessment. This process is currently underway and involves discussions within the Science Council on what indicators will be used to evaluate research quality, and which units will be evaluated in the university-level research assessment exercise.

Specific obstacles faced were: limited awareness of research assessment reform and its potential benefits; lack of evidence on potential benefits of research assessment reform; lack of institutional capacity (e.g., skilled staff, support structures); and lack of coordination among the relevant actors within the institution.

WHEN: Timeline and history of development and implementation

Tampere University was established in 2019 as a result of the merger of two Finnish universities. New fair and responsible hiring and promotion policies have been put in place. Tampere is currently gathering feedback on the new practices, with a focus on its tenure-track system. In addition, they are providing guidance and instructions on fair and responsible evaluation. More comprehensive policies are in development.

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National consortia

National-level cases

- ◆ The Dutch Recognition & Rewards Programme (The Netherlands)
- ◆ Responsible Research Network, Finland (Finland)
- ◆ Universities Norway (Norway)



The Dutch Recognition & Rewards Programme

In a position paper published in November 2019, the Netherlands' public knowledge institutions and research funders voiced a common ambition to modernize the national recognition and rewards system.¹ The purpose is to move toward more holistic evaluation practices in the Netherlands, where the focus is on academic career and research quality assessment. Although the consortium is composed of large national entities, the dynamic for change is largely bottom-up, given the academic stakeholder autonomy within the Dutch system. After developing the position paper, "Room for everyone's talent: towards a new balance in the recognition and rewards of academics," the process was decentralized for implementation by the respective Dutch institutions. Implementation of the recommendations in the position paper is currently underway across the Netherlands.

WHO: Organization profile

- **Country:** The Netherlands
- **Profile of consortia institution(s):** comprehensive university or equivalent; specialized university or equivalent; technical university; distance learning university; research funders; royal academy; university medical centers; research institutes
- **Number of FTE researchers:** > 1000
- **Organization of research evaluation:** Research unit levels
- **Who is involved?** Academic leadership, academic researchers, policy staff, research department staff, research support or management staff

WHAT: What changed and the key elements of change

In a position paper published in November 2019, "Room for everyone's talent: towards a new balance in the recognition and rewards of academics," the Netherlands' public knowledge institutions and research funders (VSNU, NFU, KNAW, NWO, and ZonMw) voiced a common ambition to modernize the current recognition and rewards system.¹ They support the following stated aims:

- The **diversification and vitalization of career paths**, thereby promoting excellence in each of the key talent areas (teaching, research, impact, patient care and leadership in academia)
- The acknowledgment of both the independence and individual qualities and ambitions of academics, as well as recognizing team performance (**Team Science**)
- A shift in focus away from quantitative elements (such as the number of publications) and toward the **quality of the work**
- A stimulation of all aspects of **Open Science**
- More emphasis on the value of **leadership in academia**

The position paper supports a more holistic view of researcher achievements through two specific approaches:

1. Redesigning academic career paths: the commitment to create a greater diversity in career paths for academic staff with room for individual academics' strengths and ambitions.
2. Quality assessment of research and research proposals: Research should be assessed for content and quality, not just for quantity or for the journal it was published in.

CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

WHY: Motivation for change

The purpose is to move toward more holistic evaluation practices. The consortium's aim is to realize a fundamental change in behavior and leadership with regard to the recognition and rewards system for academia and academics. This type of change is also conducive to a safer, more inclusive work culture that accommodates the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of current academic and social problems. As such, academics are encouraged to collaborate within and across disciplines.

The consortium is also working to build “a healthy and inspiring environment for our academic staff, where all talents are valued: teaching, research, outreach, patient care and leadership in academia.” So another motivation for change is to “strive for a differentiation of career paths so that scientists, scholars and academics can choose a career path that fits their talents.”

“The desired culture change is a fundamental change of beliefs; not just a change in the rules of the game.”² In general, the consortium notes that developing specific criteria too early, without a clearly developed vision, entails a risk of changing the rules but not the game. The first step in the transition program is to develop a vision for the desirable behavior and culture, both nationally and within the various organizations. Several Dutch institutions have already published a translation of the aims of the position paper, specific to their respective institutions.

At the same time the first research units are preparing their six-yearly research evaluation according to the new Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP 2021-2027).³ The main goal of a SEP evaluation is to evaluate a research unit in light of its own aims and strategy. To promote the desired cultural change, the new national evaluation protocol allows groups to choose their own indicators for self-evaluation.

One concern regarding the Dutch ambition to change academic career assessment and research assessment was whether the Netherlands should move alone in reforming the recognition and rewards systems for academics. Consequently, there is a push to get international partners to ensure the transportability of researchers' achievements across international borders.

Concerns were also expressed around the new model disadvantaging cultural groups or genders through the use of narrative CVs. However, preliminary indicators suggest that this is not the case.

HOW: Processes and dynamics for developing, implementing, and managing change

Although the consortium is composed of large national entities, the dynamic for change is largely bottom-up. After developing the position paper, the process was decentralized for implementation to the respective Dutch institutions. This allows the academic stakeholders to set up framework conditions for individual institutions and provide capacity building to make changes in accordance with the aims of the position paper.

In the Netherlands, autonomy for the academic sector and its stakeholders has long been the norm. Importantly, while the Dutch Ministry is supportive of the Recognition & Rewards Programme—even contributing to the subsidization of items within the consortium's budget—Dutch culture promotes autonomy to those implementing the ambitions of the position paper, namely academic institutions and research funders.



Another key aspect that enabled the development of the new system of recognition and rewards is the small number of universities and institutions within the Netherlands; it was possible for the 14 Rectors to come together and discuss recognition and rewards in academia.

To achieve the stated objectives,¹ the members of the consortium have drawn up a common transition program plan that consists of six phases:

1. Researching and formulating a vision
2. Increasing the power of imagination and experimenting
3. Adding meaning
4. Specifying and developing
5. Implementing
6. Consolidating

The implementation of the transition program will be supervised by a program board composed of delegates from participating organizations. Additionally, all consortium member organizations have their own Recognition and Rewards committees, which are responsible for changing the process and culture at their respective institutions. These members will work together throughout the process, and the steering group will be responsible for monitoring cohesion and encouraging consistency.

Specific obstacles faced were: limited awareness of research assessment reform and its potential benefits; resistance to research assessment reform from researchers; complexity of research assessment reform (e.g., different national and disciplinary practices); and alignment of institutional assessment procedures with nationally and internationally dominant procedures.

WHEN: Timeline and history of development and implementation

Beginning in 2013, there were four national agendas that more or less converged: the ambitious Open Science Agenda, the Science in Transition movement, concerns over work pressure and pressure on the system, and the introduction of career tracks with emphasis on teaching. The convergence of these themes promoted the idea of changing academic culture.

In November 2018, VNSU, NWO, NFU and ZonMw released a statement on recognition and reward of academics.² In April 2019, KNAW, NWO and ZonMw signed DORA, which VSNU had done in 2014. ZonMw and NWO held a conference in May 2019 “Scientist 2030: Evolution or Revolution.”²

Together, consortia members presented the position paper in November 2019 at a VSNU - EUA Conference on Recognition & Rewards in Rotterdam. The new Strategy Evaluation Protocol was released in March 2020^{3,4} and will be implemented 2021-2027.²

CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

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Additional resources

- Strategy evaluation protocol (SEP) 2021-2027. VSNU (2020). Video retrieved 22 November 2020 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCzrWLnEwt0>
- Career Framework for University Teaching. Retrieved 22 November 2020 from: <https://www.advancingteaching.com/resources/>



Responsible Research Network, Finland

Finland is among the first countries to have developed national recommendations on responsible research evaluation. In 2020, a task force formed by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies published the “Good Practice in Researcher Evaluation: Recommendation for Responsible Evaluation of a Researcher in Finland.”¹ A major driver for the national recommendation was the need to make conscious decisions in evaluation processes. Although many national entities were involved in developing the Recommendation, the approach is considered “bottom-up” and there was broad and enthusiastic buy-in among Finnish academic stakeholders.

WHO: Organization profile

- **Country:** Finland
- **Profile:** national interdisciplinary consortia
- **Number of FTE researchers:** <100
- **Organization of research evaluation:** national
- **Who is involved?** academic leadership, academic researchers, library staff, policy staff, research department staff, research support or management staff

WHAT: What changed and the key elements of change

The Good Practice in Researcher Evaluation: Recommendation for the Responsible Evaluation of a Researcher in Finland are guidelines to improve how researchers are assessed in Finland.¹ The Recommendation provides a set of general principles (transparency, integrity, fairness, competence, and diversity) that apply throughout 13 recommended good practices to improve four aspects of researcher evaluation, including:

- Building the evaluation process
- Evaluation of research
- Diversity of activities
- Researcher’s role in the evaluation process

The aim of the Recommendation is to encourage all those involved in the researcher evaluation process to consider how the process impacts the development of the research community as a whole, and how to achieve the desired outcome in the most responsible way.

The Recommendation pays particular attention to the culture change required in evaluation as a result of new ways in which research is conducted and communicated. For example, new forms of research knowledge sharing, changes in research processes, multidisciplinary and new phenomenon-based research methods, as well as digitalization, have all had an impact on researchers’ work. Because of this, evaluation culture needs to align with the developing research culture.

Research transparency, ethics, diversity, and societal interactions are important themes throughout the Recommendation. In addition, the role of the researcher in the larger community, and as a teacher and mentor, has been given a central role in the Recommendation.

CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

WHY: Motivation for change

A major driver for the national Recommendation was the need to make deliberate and conscious decisions regarding goals, criteria, data, and methods in evaluation processes.¹ The Recommendation represents an attempt to “change and make more responsible” evaluation practices compared with the ones currently in place.

Additionally, there was a desire to foster a research culture embodying the desired principles of transparency, integrity, fairness, competence, and diversity. The Recommendation focuses on providing guidance to reflect on and implement their responsible evaluation practices.

One success was the broad and enthusiastic adoption of the principles behind the Recommendation. For example, the Academy of Finland, the main national funder for basic research, confirmed support for responsible evaluation of researchers.² An initial challenge was to gain a consensus of opinion across all fields and a broad range of stakeholders, which was ultimately addressed through public consultation and discussion.

HOW: Processes and dynamics for developing, implementing, and managing change

The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies formally initiated a national task force to consider responsible research evaluation.

A national task force was founded based on shared concerns identified by learned societies, research funders, policy organizations, publishers, national open science coordination, and the national research integrity board. While many national entities were involved in the Recommendation’s creation, the approach is considered “bottom-up”; in Finland there is a historic culture of autonomy for academic stakeholders.

The Responsible Researcher Evaluation task force facilitated necessary dialogue with researchers across academic disciplines in order to obtain genuine buy-in. The entire Finnish research community, including HR staff, librarians, and researchers, were invited to comment on an initial draft of recommendations. The draft recommendation was opened to public consultation, and over 50 research-related organizations participated. The task force developed the Recommendation with the feedback from research community.

In addition, the Recommendation timing coincided with the uptake of FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable) data and open science initiatives in Finland. These initiatives incentivize and reward researchers for producing open and FAIR data, and align with the Recommendation. In the coming years, the focus will be on building the capacity to move evaluation practices beyond quantitative publication metrics and in closer alignment with the goals of the Recommendation.

The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies was fortunate in that it is a trusted and independent entity, and it was within their purview to initiate the task force and propose the Recommendation. Additionally, they had the respected authority necessary to build a broad coalition of stakeholder groups to develop the Recommendation.



Specific obstacles faced were: lack of evidence on potential benefits of research assessment reform; resistance to research assessment reform from researchers; concerns over increased costs; complexity of research assessment reform; lack of coordination among the relevant actors within the institution; and lack of reliable data sources for assessment.

WHEN: Timeline and history of development and implementation

The formation of the task force by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies in 2018 was preceded by a long period of informal contact and working through existing networks. Once the task force was created, the policy development process took 12 months. The working group published their recommendations in a report in early 2020.¹

In 2020, the task force completed its work, and a steering committee was subsequently formed to implement the recommendations and develop impact measures. The Finnish national consortia are working on developing the data architecture and models necessary to encourage the Finnish research and funding organizations to change and improve their evaluation practices. In December 2020, Universities Finland endorsed the Recommendation in their theses on sustainable development and responsibility.³

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CASE STUDY REPORT

Reimagining Academic Career Assessment: Stories of innovation and change

Universities Norway

As a part of a broader action plan on Open Science, the national consortium Universities Norway formed a research assessment working group in the fall of 2019 with the objective to build a national career assessment framework. Current government-directed practice is holistic, including a focus on narrative self-evaluation. The anticipated report from the working group, due by the end of 2020, is expected to articulate current good practices across Norway by providing a more systematic and structured approach to assessment. Internal drivers within Norway, such as the transition to Open Science, the prevalence of DORA-like career assessment attitudes, as well as the need to assess teaching competencies, motivated the formation of the working group. While the internal drivers established the need for action, the formation of the working group was inspired by external forces, such as the national assessment reform efforts in Finland and the Netherlands, as well as the European University Association's Expert Group on Open Science.

WHO: Organization profile

- **Country:** Norway
- **Profile of institution:** University Association
- **Number of FTE researchers:** < 100
- **Organization of research evaluation:** institutional/university level
- **Who is involved?** academic leadership, academic researchers, policy staff, research department staff, research support or management staff

WHAT: What changed and the key elements of change

In the fall of 2019, Universities Norway established a research assessment working group to articulate and improve existing practices through building “a framework for how to think about career assessment in light of open science.” Their framework, which is set to release by the end of 2020, will provide structured career assessment guidelines, modeled in part after the European Commission's Open Science Career Assessment Matrix (OS-CAM).¹

The proposed Norwegian Career Assessment Matrix (NOR-CAM) draws inspiration from OS-CAM but is adapted for the Norwegian context and has been further developed into a generic framework that includes but goes beyond open science. It uses similar categories to those in OS-CAM: research output, research process, educational competency, leadership and service, societal interaction and impact, and other experience. In addition to these six categories, which form the rows in the Norwegian assessment matrix, there are three columns:

- **Description** of criteria with clear definitions
- **Documentation** and objective evidence for each criterion
- **Reflection** and qualitative self-assessment

In Norway, the structure for hiring and career progression is relatively uniform and framed by government regulations. Importantly, the law is sufficiently open-ended, and recruitment and hiring practices have gradually shifted over the past decade from a narrow focus on publications-based proxy measures toward a more holistic view of researcher accomplishments. However, significant variations between institutions and academic fields still remain.



Current practices are detailed, well documented, and increasingly holistic, often including a focus on narrative self-evaluation. But it has still been necessary to issue recommendations to use publication metrics with caution and not as a basis for decisions on an individual level. The anticipated report from the Universities Norway working group is expected to communicate and extend current good practices across Norway by articulating a more systematic and structured approach to assessment.

WHY: Motivation for change

Internal drivers within Norway, such as the transition to Open Science and support for DORA, established a need for action and inspired the working group. However, the formation of the working group was sparked by external forces, such as the national assessment reform efforts in Finland and the Netherlands, as well as the European University Association's Expert Group on Science 2.0/Open Science.

Because of a desire to create a Norwegian system “that will work well [also] in an international context,” the changes within Europe were critical to establishing the working group. Stakeholders were keen to implement national assessment reform within an international context.

A major goal of the working group is to improve and develop the current assessment system. The “adoption of the same system and approach to assessment will greatly simplify the process for everyone.” The current criteria for universities in Norway, as established by the government, is relatively detailed and holistic; what is lacking is a “systematic approach to collect information and [consensus] in how to present [the information] in an easy way.” The long-term goal of the working group is to develop tools and build capacity for the national documentation matrix. For example, the working group is focused on building digital tools to make currently available material more integrated and accessible.

HOW: Processes and dynamics for developing, implementing, and managing change

Bottom-up change was stimulated by individual academic stakeholders, including working group members. This approach to reform is within the larger context of a parallel government-initiated working group on career structures at large, with a focus on education-driven careers. There was an observed synergy between the working groups, especially as the Universities Norway working group realized the need to extend the scope of their work beyond Open Science. The working group quickly realized that it is more efficient to evaluate openness as one parameter of each of the categories, rather than considering it as a category on its own.

The research assessment working group is composed of representatives from Norwegian universities, one research institute, The Young Academy of Norway, and The Research Council of Norway, the largest funder in the country. The working group acknowledged the difference between evaluating research projects for grant funding and evaluating academic staff in a university setting, so it formally established a university focus and perspective. While the government is not formally involved, they remain informed of the group's progress.

The top-down methodology described here is relatively easy to adopt in Norway because of the small number of universities. However, the current goal of the working group is not necessarily to advocate for the amendment of any national laws or regulations. Instead, the working group is striving to change practice

CASE STUDY REPORT

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and build capacity in the long term by offering a practical assessment matrix as a framework for institutions to take in a broader set of evaluation criteria, as well as establishing concrete digital tools to easily access existing national databases, such as Cristin² and other national education and teaching databases.

Specific obstacles faced were: limited awareness of research assessment reform and its potential benefits; lack of evidence on potential benefits of research assessment reform; resistance to research assessment reform from academic leadership; resistance to research assessment reform from researchers; concerns over increased costs (e.g., skilled staff, support structures); complexity of research assessment reform (e.g., different national and disciplinary practices); lack of institutional capacity (e.g., skilled staff, support structures); and lack of coordination among the relevant actors within the institution.

WHEN: Timeline and history of development and implementation

There was a gradual change in Norwegian national laws regarding career assessment. Current government-directed practice is relatively holistic, often including a focus on narrative self-evaluation. The Universities Norway working group was formed in the fall of 2019. It anticipates the publication of a finished report by the end of 2020. They state, “it is expected that there will be various rounds of national consultations throughout 2021.”

References

1. Working Group on Rewards under Open Science Report, European Commission. Evaluation of research careers fully acknowledging Open Science practices: rewards, incentives and/or recognition for researchers practicing Open Science (2017). Retrieved 25 November 2020 from https://ec.europa.eu/research/openscience/pdf/os_rewards_wgreport_final.pdf
2. CRISTIN. Current Research Information System in Norway. Retrieved 25 November 2020 from <https://www.cristin.no/english/index.html>



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The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 48 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations, EUA ensures that the voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact their activities.

The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) is a global initiative to advance practical and robust approaches to research and researcher assessment across all scholarly disciplines. Since its publication in 2013, the declaration has transformed from a call to action into an active initiative that uses community engagement and resource development to raise awareness about new tools and processes in research assessment, facilitate implementation of good practice, and improve equity by calling for broader representation of researchers in the design of research assessment practices that directly address the structural inequalities in academia.

SPARC Europe is one of Europe's key and long-standing voices advocating for unfettered access to research and education in Higher Education – for the academic and education community; for the whole of society. More openness in research and education, it believes, will lead to an accelerated rate of discovery in academia and in the private sector, and of learning at every strata of education. Its mission is to provide leadership to Europe's Higher Education and research communities, and those that support it, to enable the conditions and opportunities to maximise the access and re-use of Europe's research and educational resources for all whilst respecting diversity and equity.

EUROPEAN
UNIVERSITY
ASSOCIATION

Avenue de l'Yser, 24
1040 Brussels
Belgium

T: +32 2 230 55 44
info@eua.eu
www.eua.eu

