

## Adhesion of the Universitat Jaume I to the document “Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment” promoted by the “Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment”

Approved by the Governing Council in its session number 1/2023 of 26 January 2023

The “[Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment](#)” is a working group composed of universities, public and private research organisations, research funders and evaluation agencies that aims to promote the implementation of a new system of evaluation of research activity at European level in order to foster the improvement of the quality and impact of its results.

The system is based on the recognition of the diversity of research results, methodologies and practices for different fields of knowledge and at different stages of the research career. In addition, the aim is to promote the advancement of good practices such as ethics and integrity in research practice, open science, dissemination of research activity, and so forth. All these initiatives are in line with different previous agreements of this Governing Council, such as the Code of Good Practice in Research and Doctoral Studies, approved in September 2022, or the Institutional Declaration in Favour of Promoting Open Access at Universitat Jaume I, approved in October 2020.

In January 2022, the coalition started drafting a roadmap which, under the title “[Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#)”, was finally approved by the participants in July 2022. It should be noted that the Universitat Jaume I attended the different working meetings in which the characteristics of this "roadmap" were defined. In Spain, different universities, foundations and associations (such as CRUE) as well as different regional evaluation agencies already belong to this coalition.

Essentially, the basic idea is to modify evaluation systems by reinforcing qualitative evaluation while making responsible use of quantitative indicators:

*“This requires basing assessment **primarily on qualitative judgement**, for which peer review is central, **supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.**”*

It also aims to ensure that the results of this evaluation are decisive in the selection and promotion of teaching staff or in the allocation of resources for research.

- *“deciding which researchers to recruit, promote or reward,*
- *selecting which research proposals to fund, and identifying which research units and organisations to support”*

This process is implemented through the voluntary adherence of organisations to the already agreed roadmap and implies the acceptance of a series of commitments and a time frame for their implementation

*“We commit to achieve reform through a Coalition of research funding organisations, research performing organisations, national/regional assessment authorities and agencies, as well as associations of the above organisations, learned societies and other relevant organisations, that is global in scope”*

Nevertheless, the document already points out the difficulty of achieving its implementation by stating the following:

*“Respect the autonomy of research organisations. **By safeguarding the independence of research performing organisations in the evaluation of their researchers while implementing the present principles**, yet striving to prevent contradictions between the assessment of research, researchers and institutions, and between institutions, to avoid fragmentation of the research and innovation landscape and to enable the mobility of researchers.”*

Moreover, the Coalition proposes a cooperative working model in which best practices and experiences are shared among the different institutions.

**The core commitments** of the document can be defined as follows:

1. Recognise the **diversity of contributions** to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research
2. Base research assessment **primarily on qualitative evaluation** for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators
3. **Abandon** inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of the **Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index**.
4. Avoid the use of **rankings of research organisations** in research assessment

To this end, it is recommended to broaden the assessment of research activity in accordance with the diversity of contributions of the disciplines, and also to assess the social impact, open access, teaching, teamwork, supervision of doctoral theses, and so forth.

The idea is that qualitative evaluation should be the main method (qualitative is understood as peer review), without renouncing the use of quantitative indicators, but only when they are necessary and provide relevant information. In short, the idea is to turn the current model upside down.

It is recognised that this assessment based on peer review needs to be widely recognised and supported for its implementation to be effective. At the national level it is key that academic career progression assessment agencies (ANECA) or research project allocation agencies (AEI – Spanish Research Agency) have a role to play.

The document also sets out the commitments to be made by the institutions so that this change of model can be implemented effectively:

1. **Commit resources to reforming research assessment** as is needed to achieve the organisational changes.
2. **Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes.**
3. **Raise awareness** of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use.
4. **Exchange practices** and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition.
5. **Communicate progress** made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments.
6. **Evaluate practices, criteria and tools** based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research.

Finally, the document also entails a commitment to implement the new system within the time frame scheduled for implementing the new system:

*A. The signatories of this Agreement agree to share with each other and with their community how their organisation has started the process of reviewing or developing criteria, tools and processes in line with the **core Commitments and according to an action plan with defined milestones, by the end of 2023 or within one year of signing the Agreement.***

*B. Signatories of this Agreement agree to regularly demonstrate progress towards reviewing, developing and evaluating criteria, tools and processes that fulfil the core Commitments, **with a touch point at end of 2027 or within five years of signing the Agreement**, by which time they will have worked through at least one cycle of review and development of their assessment criteria, tools and processes.*

For all the above reasons, with the favourable opinion of the Governing Board and the favourable report of the Research and Doctoral Committee, by virtue of the powers attributed in Article 45 of the Statutes of the Universitat Jaume I of Castelló, the Governing Board, in session number 1/2022, dated 23 January 2023, adopts the following AGREEMENT:

Approve the adhesion of the Universitat Jaume I to the document “*Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment*” promoted by the “*Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment*”.