

University of Silesia CoARA Action Plan

Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment

Katowice, 2025 r.

Institutional Profile – The University of Silesia in Katowice

The University of Silesia in Katowice is an institution operating across four academic cities: Katowice, Sosnowiec, Cieszyn, and Chorzów. It comprises eight faculties, including the Krzysztof Kieślowski Film School, 26 research institutes, two doctoral schools, and two regional specialist observatories. The University offers education in 89 fields of study and 183 specialisations for 18,000 undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and postgraduate students. It boasts nearly 250 laboratories and studios, while its academic community—comprising almost 2,000 researchers—is organised into over 300 research teams and 27 interdisciplinary research centres. In addition, it promotes innovation through its special purpose vehicle, SPIN-US, along with seven spin-off companies.

Established on 8 June 1968, the University of Silesia has grown to become one of Poland's largest public universities. The University of Silesia is also home to the Scientific Information Centre and Academic Library (CINiBA), a modern facility that serves both the academic community and the general public by providing access to a vast collection of resources and is equipped with state-of-the-art technologies to support research and education.

As an institution with an international reach, the University of Silesia cooperates with partners from over 90 countries. It co-founded the Transform4Europe Alliance alongside ten other European universities, a project implemented under the Horizon Europe programme. Since 2024, the University has been a signatory of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and a member of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).

Guiding Principles and Strategic Objectives of the Action Plan

The Action Plan is designed to align the University of Silesia with the principles outlined by the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). The document sets out a framework for research evaluation reform, ensuring transparency, inclusivity, and the responsible use of research metrics. Our commitment is to establish an assessment culture that values the quality and societal impact of research rather than relying solely on traditional bibliometric indicators.

A modern approach to research evaluation requires broad recognition of diverse academic contributions. The University of Silesia acknowledges that valuable research extends beyond publications in high-impact journals. Teaching, peer review, data stewardship, software development, and community engagement are equally significant components of academic work, all of which contribute to the advancement of knowledge and societal progress. The University also prioritizes evaluating academic staff's fulfilment of organisational responsibilities, ensuring their institutional roles align with broader strategic objectives. In light of this, we seek to implement an assessment system that fairly acknowledges the multidimensional nature of research activities and career paths. Regular consultations with the academic community, including surveys and workshops, will provide valuable insights into the strengths and challenges of the system, enabling us to refine and adapt our policies in response to emerging needs and trends in research assessment.

This document also serves as a guiding framework for institutional policy development. The University of Silesia will systematically review and refine its research evaluation practices to ensure that they remain evidence-based, fair, and inclusive. In particular, we will integrate responsible research assessment principles into key institutional policies governing hiring, promotion, and funding allocation. By doing so, we will establish a system that not only upholds academic integrity but also fosters a research culture that values diversity, cooperation, and excellence.

Key Commitments and Implementation Framework

- Broad recognition of academic contributions. We acknowledge a diverse range of activities—including teaching, peer review, data stewardship, software development, and community engagement—that contribute to scientific and societal advancement.
- Transparent and inclusive assessment processes. Emphasis is placed on qualitative evaluation and transparent, inclusive processes. All assessment procedures are clearly communicated, with well-defined criteria aligned with international best practices.
- Commitment to Open Science and Data Sharing. We promote open-access publication, FAIR-compliant data sharing, and robust capacity-building initiatives. This includes specialised training in research data management, grant writing, and infrastructure utilisation, all aimed at enhancing research integrity and innovation.

- Continuous improvement through evaluation and stakeholder engagement. Regular feedback from the academic community will be collected through surveys and workshops, ensuring that assessment criteria remain relevant and aligned with the evolving research landscape.
- Fostering a cooperative and inclusive research environment. Our ultimate objective is to cultivate a research culture that values integrity, diversity, and cooperation, supporting researchers at all career stages and ensuring long-term institutional development.
- Strategic Policy Framework. Our structured approach integrates CoARA principles into institutional policies governing hiring, promotion, and funding allocation. This framework is designed to create a fair, evidence-based, and sustainable evaluation system.

CoARA-Aligned Strategies – Enhancing Research Support and Career Development

HR Strategy for Researchers – Excellence and Transparency

Since 2017, the University of Silesia in Katowice (USil) has been awarded the HR Excellence in Research award by the European Commission. This prestigious accolade places USil among elite institutions that provide optimal conditions for their researchers, including transparent recruitment and assessment processes, stable employment, and opportunities for professional development at every career stage.

The award is part of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R), an initiative that promotes transparent recruitment practices and the creation of attractive job positions at European universities.

Ensuring the highest standards in recruitment, evaluation, and promoting academic staff in accordance with the European framework for research careers and the Charter for Researchers is crucial for USil. Significant changes have resulted from the implementation of the first HRS4R Action Plan, including:

- identifying HR as a key area in its development strategy to achieve strategic goals in both science and education,
- modernising and standardising key processes in the 'employee life cycle': recruitment, onboarding, performance assessment, promotion,
- implementing the OTM-R policy for recruiting academic staff,
- developing its own model of research competencies, in cooperation with the European Commission, with a diagnostic tool for all career development levels (R1-R4),
- implementation of the Declaration of the University of Silesia – Community of Equal and Diverse and the Gender Equality Plan,

- first place in Poland's Best Employers 2023 by Forbes magazine in the 'Education and Research' category,
- active participation in the development of the Polish EURAXESS Network,
- implementing HRS4R standards in T4EU.

Currently, USil is developing the new strategy. It will identify areas for improvement and set community goals for the next three years.

COMMITMENT COMPLIANCE: 1–4

Research Excellence Initiative Programme

A key component of the University of Silesia's commitment to responsible research assessment, as outlined in the CoARA principles, is the **Research Excellence Initiative (IDB)**. This programme embodies the University's strategic approach to fostering research excellence through sustainable and inclusive support mechanisms. By offering comprehensive assistance at various career stages, IDB aligns with CoARA's emphasis on recognising the diversity of research contributions, ensuring qualitative evaluation, and promoting international cooperation. Ultimately, IDB serves as a comprehensive and flexible support system, ensuring that researchers at the University of Silesia have the necessary resources, recognition, and opportunities to thrive.

IDB operates within six strategic areas: research, development, infrastructure, young talents, scientific mobility, and visibility. The **Freedom of Research** initiative enables researchers to explore innovative ideas without undue reliance on impact metrics, fostering a culture of intellectual freedom and scientific creativity. Furthermore, IDB plays a pivotal role in enhancing interdisciplinary and international cooperation, ensuring that assessment processes acknowledge the importance of diverse research environments. By supporting joint research projects with prestigious European institutions and facilitating mobility programmes for long-term fellowships, the initiative strengthens the global engagement of the University's academic community. Importantly, the evaluation of applications in all IDB call for proposals is carried out in a qualitative and expert manner, moving away from quantitative methods.

Beyond financial support for research, IDB prioritises capacity-building and skills development. Specialised training programmes, including workshops on research data management, grant writing, and laboratory infrastructure utilisation, ensuring that researchers are equipped with the necessary skills to navigate modern scientific challenges. The establishment of a community of data stewards further enhances research integrity by promoting best practices in data governance and compliance with FAIR principles.

COMMITMENT COMPLIANCE: 1, 5

Qualitative Evaluation in Artistic Disciplines

The University of Silesia in Katowice is composed of two faculties representing artistic circles: the Faculty of Arts and Educational Science in Cieszyn, which focuses on musical and fine arts, and the Krzysztof Kieslowski Film School, which specialises in film arts, photography, and theatrical arts. Both faculties employ staff with the highest artistic and scientific achievements.

The evaluation of research and activities of artists at the University of Silesia in Katowice is based on qualitative assessment, considering the specifics of their achievements and the valuable contribution to science and culture, including various achievements beyond publications.

Each work is evaluated by distinguished specialists in artistic disciplines represented in the Commission for the Evaluation of Artistic Achievements. The legal basis for qualitative evaluation is *Regulation No. 103 of the Rector of the University of Silesia in Katowice of 26 June 2023 on the method of awarding points for artistic achievements in artistic disciplines in the field of art.*

Specialists on the Commission evaluate artistic achievements quarterly and may request additional information from the individual whose work is under evaluation regarding a specific artistic accomplishment. The artist undergoing review has full visibility into the evaluation process and retains the right to appeal the results. This ensures a transparent evaluation process that remains firmly in the hands of the academic community.

COMMITMENT COMPLIANCE: 1–3, 5–6

Strategic Roadmap for 2024-2027 – Operationalising CoARA Commitments

Lp.	Core Commitment	Actions taken so far at USil	Action Plan
1	Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research	Early stage implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment procedure (OTM-R policy) Job evaluation/Assessment procedure (2nd phase) Promotion procedure Redesigning promotion and awards criteria: valuing holistic contributions (social impact, public 	Improving evaluation procedures for research activities in HR processes for academic staff: recruitment, performance assessment, and job promotion. Planning and developing the capabilities of the University's CRIS (Current Research Information System) to enable the broader collection of research output data,



		<p>engagement, applied research, and data stewardship)</p> <p>Note: The Polish evaluation system establishes criteria for the assessment of scientific activity. Universities are discouraged from introducing significant reforms to their internal evaluation practices due to the potential negative impact on funding granted annually by the Ministry. For this reason, internal criteria must reflect the expected outcomes defined in statutory regulations.</p>	<p>thereby recognising the diversity of research results across disciplines (including the number of open access articles, preprints, anthologies, and editorial, and encyclopaedic articles).</p> <p>Planning and developing the capabilities of the University's CRIS (Current Research Information System) to enable a broader collection of information on staff activities, such as research internships, scholarships, and awards.</p>
2	Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators	<p>Early stage implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruitment procedure• Job evaluation/Assessment procedure (2nd phase)• Promotion procedure <p>Note: The assessment of scientific output in HR processes is based on peer review, which is essential for publication processes and research grant applications.</p> <p>Implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narrative Evaluation Criteria in Internal Grant Programs (IDB)• Field-Tailored Assessment Frameworks	<p>Improving evaluation procedures for research activities in HR processes for academic staff: recruitment, performance assessment, and job promotion.</p> <p>Developing the capabilities of the CRIS (Current Research Information System) and other systems to collect and profile various types of information on the academic community's contribution to research and knowledge exchange, including collecting data on doctoral theses reviews and the role of reviewers in postdoctoral degree procedures.</p>

3	Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index	<p>Fully implemented in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment procedure Job evaluation/Assessment procedure Promotion procedure <p>Note: The assessment of scientific output in HR processes is based on peer review, which is essential for publication processes and research grant applications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting good practices among the USil academic staff. Preparation of materials to raise awareness of good practices among expert committees and decision-makers.
4	Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment	<p>Fully implemented in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment procedure Job evaluation/Assessment procedure Promotion procedure Incentive programmes 	Promoting good practices among the USil academic staff.
5	Allocate resources to reforming research assessment to the extent necessary to achieve the organisational changes committed to	<p>Early stage implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job evaluation/Assessment procedure (2nd phase) Promotion procedure <p>Note: USil has allocated the necessary resources for the purpose of internal changes in its science evaluation processes; USil representatives are also engaged in the CoARA National Chapter (PL).</p>	<p>Secondment of USil representatives to work in the working teams of the National Chapter of CoARA (PL).</p> <p>Investments in the development of tools and infrastructure – expand data collection and analysis systems to cover a wide range of research outputs. These investments will enable the inclusion of both traditional and alternative forms of scholarly contributions, such as data management, teaching activities, and community engagement.</p>

6	Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools, and processes	<p>Early stage implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment procedure (OTM-R policy) • Job evaluation/Assessment procedure • Promotion procedure • Academic staff assessments incorporate a comprehensive review of all academic contributions (research, teaching, societal engagement) and include a formal interview to contextualise achievements and support career development <p>Note: The Polish evaluation system establishes criteria for the assessment of scientific activity. Universities are discouraged from introducing significant reforms to their internal evaluation practices due to the potential negative impact on funding granted annually by the Ministry. For this reason, internal criteria must reflect the expected outcomes defined in statutory regulations.</p>	Improving evaluation procedures for research activities in HR processes for academic staff: recruitment, performance assessment and job promotion.
7	Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and	<p>Work in progress: USil has systematically improved its approach to promote good practices in research assessment to stimulate raising awareness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting good practices among the USil academic staff. • Including information about good practices in research – open science and open access, recognition of the



	training on assessment criteria and processes and their use	We are increasing the visibility of researchers' activities that do not fit into the quantitative evaluation framework (such as community cooperation, popular science and organisational activities) through publications in the newsletter, website, academic press, and social media.	predatory publishing model, transformations within qualitative evaluation – in university communication.
8	Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition	Work in progress: USil representatives are engaged in the CoARA National Chapter (PL).	Promoting good practices among the CoARA community.
9	Communicate progress made on adherence to the principles and implementation of the Commitments	Early stage implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">the CoARA website is linked to the USil HR Excellence in Research website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Developing and updating the CoARA section of the USil HR Excellence in Research website.Inclusion of CoARA on the agenda of academic staff committee meetings.
10	Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research	Work in progress: Transparent data sharing and continuous capacity building – investing in advanced analytical tools and personnel training to maintain an adaptive, state-of-the-art evaluation system that evolves with emerging research trends and technological advancements.	Regular monitoring and (re)evaluation of the criteria, processes, practices, and tools used for science evaluation.

Conclusions

The reform process at the University of Silesia represents a strategic shift from a predominantly quantitative research evaluation model to one that embraces qualitative, peer-based assessments. This transformation is anchored in the principles of CoARA, emphasising the recognition of diverse academic contributions – not only publications, but also teaching, peer review, data stewardship, and community engagement. Key initiatives include the modernisation of recruitment, performance assessment, and promotion processes, as well as the enhancement of research infrastructure through systems like the Current Research Information System (CRIS) and the promotion of open science practices.

Despite the progress made since the 2019 reform, one major challenge remains: aligning these innovative internal solutions with the existing national legal frameworks and traditional evaluation systems. Addressing this integration will be critical to establishing a sustainable, evidence-based, and inclusive research evaluation culture that meets both international standards and national requirements.