



Policy on responsible evaluation of research and researchers at the University of Vaasa

The University of Vaasa's policy on the responsible evaluation of research and researchers defines shared principles for high-quality, transparent, and equitable evaluation. The policy develops evaluation practices by taking into account both the university's own objectives and the international and national principles of responsible evaluation to which the university is committed.

The policy is based on the principles defined in the CoARA Agreement (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment), which emphasize qualitative, context-dependent evaluation as well as recognition of the diverse contributions of researchers.

Responsibility is implemented by developing open and transparent evaluation practices that support and promote the quality of research and the diversity of research careers.

Monitoring the objectives of the policy ensures that all evaluations of research and researchers conducted at the University of Vaasa are consistently responsible and fair. We also assess the effectiveness of our own evaluation practices.

The policy provides a framework for applying the principles of responsible evaluation in different evaluation situations. The policy is complemented by practical guidelines related for example tenure track evaluations or research assessment exercise.

The systematic application of the principles defined in the policy increases the university community's trust in evaluation activities.

By increasing awareness within the university community, responsible evaluation practices are strengthened. The policy is complemented by more detailed processes and practical guidelines.

Basic principles of evaluation

- **Diversity and flexibility:** Diverse evaluation criteria emphasize the quality and impact of work, taking disciplinary differences into account. Quantitative indicators support qualitative expert evaluation.
- **Integrity and ethics:** Evaluations are conducted ethically and in accordance with the principles of good scientific practice. Honesty, diligence, and accuracy are followed in evaluation.
- **Fairness and equal treatment:** Equality and fair treatment are taken into account. Evaluation is based on predefined indicators and submitted materials.

- **Transparency and openness:** Evaluation processes and criteria are open and transparent to all parties.
- **Competence and expertise:** Evaluations are conducted so that evaluators have sufficient expertise both in terms of content and in implementing responsible evaluation.

Different evaluation situations: Researcher evaluation

The principles of responsible evaluation are followed, for example, in the following situations:

- Recruitment of teaching and research staff, open calls and invitation procedures
- Career advancement evaluations
- Applications for the title of docent
- Salary system (YPJ) evaluations and rewarding of staff

In these situations, evaluation is supported by application guidelines that operationalize the principles of responsible evaluation into practice.

Evaluation targets the researcher's work as a whole and takes into account its significance for science, the scientific community, and society, as well as the nature and needs of the research.

The University of Vaasa follows national and international principles of responsible evaluation in researcher assessment and continuously develops its practices towards qualitative, diverse, transparent, and fair evaluation. These principles are applied as described below.

1. Quality and contextuality

- In the evaluation of researchers and research, primary emphasis is placed on the scientific quality, content, and significance of research rather than purely quantitative assessment. Evaluation is always carried out in a context-sensitive manner so that the researcher is assessed in light of the practices of their discipline, publication culture, and the objectives of the evaluation.
- The diversity of research careers is recognized, and evaluation takes into account career stage, mobility, possible career breaks, and different ways of developing expertise and building a research career.
- Evaluation criteria and methods are defined appropriately in relation to the purpose of the evaluation and are clearly defined before the evaluation process.

2. Recognition of diverse merits

- The researcher's merits are examined broadly so that, in addition to research work, teaching, supervision, leadership, collaboration, as well as societal interaction and impact are taken into account.
- Evaluation covers a wide range of research outputs, such as publications, research data, software, and methods.
- Open science practices are valued, including open publishing, opening of research data, and other activities that promote openness.
- The role and contribution of the researcher as part of research groups, networks, and collaborative knowledge production are also taken into account.

3. Responsible use of metrics

- Publication metrics and other quantitative indicators are used in evaluation only to support qualitative expert assessment and not as independent evaluation criteria.
- In their interpretation, disciplinary characteristics and the limitations of indicators are considered, and their use is guided by the aim of avoiding oversimplified or misleading conclusions.
- Evaluators must have sufficient understanding of the meaning, functioning principles, and limitations of the indicators used.

4. Openness, fairness, and development of evaluation culture

- The evaluation system is based on transparency: principles, criteria, and processes are clearly defined, documented, and communicated openly to all parties. The overall evaluation and its outcome are justified and reliably documented.
- Evaluation is carried out fairly and impartially based on predefined criteria, and the data used in evaluation is collected in a comparable manner.
- Diversity among evaluators and evaluation panels is considered, and evaluators strive to recognize and prevent the effects of unconscious biases.
- Ethical principles, honesty, and confidentiality are followed in evaluation. Conflicts of interest are identified and handled appropriately. Those involved in preparation, evaluation, and decision-making have sufficient expertise and are familiar with the objectives of the evaluation process and the methods of responsible evaluation.
- The organization continuously develops its evaluation practices and monitors their effectiveness, equality, and impact. Evaluation processes are designed appropriately to support high-quality and efficient evaluation. A responsible evaluation culture is actively promoted as part of the organization's strategic leadership and operations.

Different evaluation situations: Research assessment

The Universities Act (Section 87, 558/2009) requires regular evaluation of research and its impact. At the University of Vaasa, research assessment is carried out at regular intervals. The evaluation is implemented as a developmental and participatory process characterized by diversity, relevance, and a future-oriented approach.

The evaluation examines scientific impact, the research environment and conditions for research activity, as well as societal impact.

The areas under review are evaluated in a multifaceted and multi-level manner from several perspectives by identifying strengths and areas for development. Qualitative evaluation is carried out through reflective self-assessment reports, surveys, and independent scientific peer review.

The units being evaluated play an essential role both in the planning of the evaluation and in the interpretation and utilization of the results. Openness and the involvement of the university community in the planning and interpretation of evaluations ensure their relevance and impact.

Quantitative indicators of research activity support reflective self-assessment, which serves as a tool for improving research conditions. Peer review reports and recommendations support the development of high-quality research activity, research impact, and the research environment.

Targets are set for development, measures are agreed upon, and the achievement of objectives is monitored. The evaluation report is published on the university's website, and its results are used in the strategic and operational development of research activities at the university and its units.

Commitments underlying the policy

CoARA Agreement

The University of Vaasa joined the international CoARA initiative in 2022 and signed the agreement on reforming research assessment. The university is committed to promoting assessment practices that recognize the diverse outputs, practices, and modes of research. Evaluation processes aim at transparency and justification. University also promotes the use of open infrastructures and data sources. Tools in use include ORCID and DOI identifiers as well as the Osuva publication repository and its aggregation to the OpenAIRE service. The commitments, responsibilities, and timelines are recorded in the University of Vaasa's CoARA action plan (2024).

DORA Declaration

The University of Vaasa joined the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) in 2022. By signing, the university has committed to developing research assessment, responsible use of quantitative indicators, and strengthening qualitative evaluation. Quantitative metrics are used to support qualitative assessment. Metrics must be based on relevant and transparent data and analysis methods. Disciplinary differences and evaluation objectives are taken into account. The university strives to implement

University of Vaasa

Wolffintie 32, PL 700, 65101 Vaasa
tel. +358 29 449 8000

www.uwasa.fi

responsible, transparent, and diverse evaluation that recognizes the diversity of research outputs and disciplinary differences.

National Recommendation for Researcher Evaluation (TSV 2020)

The national recommendation compiled under the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK) brings together general principles of researcher evaluation: transparency, integrity, fairness, competence, and diversity. These are applied in good practices concerning evaluation processes, research evaluation, diversity of researcher roles, and participation.

According to the recommendation, evaluation should support high-quality research as well as diverse and sustainable research careers.

The University of Vaasa is committed to following the TENK guideline “Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland” and the guidelines on ethical review in the human sciences.

European Charter for Researchers

The European Charter for Researchers was updated in 2023. The University of Vaasa has been awarded the HR Excellence in Research label as recognition of its commitment to implementing the charter’s principles.

The principles focus on ethics and openness, researcher evaluation and career paths, working conditions, and career development. They emphasize responsible evaluation, open science, and appreciation of diverse career paths, as well as mobility and continuous learning.

National Declaration on Open Science

The University of Vaasa has signed the national Declaration for Open Science and Research 2025–2030 and is committed to its objectives.

The declaration defines openness as a shared value and foundation for development and sets four goals:

- open operating culture
- open scholarly publications
- open research data and methods
- open learning

Responsibility, ethics, and researchers’ autonomy are emphasized. Open science is part of the university’s strategic policy, supported by its Policy and Principles for Open Science (2021). The university actively monitors and evaluates the level and development of open science.

University of Vaasa

Wolffintie 32, PL 700, 65101 Vaasa
tel. +358 29 449 8000

www.uwasa.fi