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Action Plan

## Malmö University CoARA Action plan 2024–2027

Malmö University joined the Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) in November 2022 by signing the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA)<sup>1</sup>.

Malmö University is a modern university with a distinctly interdisciplinary character in research and education.<sup>2</sup> Our vision is to contribute to a more sustainable and equal society through research-based knowledge, critical reflection, and readiness to act.<sup>3</sup> Malmö University core values are founded on the human, democratic and academic values that have emerged from the ideals of an open society, freedom of speech and critical thinking. Our core values are very much in line with the ARRA ambition and the four core commitments:

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 Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index.
4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://coara.eu/app/uploads/2022/09/2022\\_07\\_19\\_rra\\_agreement\\_final.pdf](https://coara.eu/app/uploads/2022/09/2022_07_19_rra_agreement_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Malmö University is organised into five faculties, a university library and central administration and services. The five faculties are organised in a total of fifteen departments. Research is also conducted at five cross-faculty research centres. More information is available here: <https://mau.se/en/about-us/organisation/>.

<sup>3</sup> Malmö University Strategy 2025 <https://mau.app.box.com/s/mrrmuh3yzjsq9kkt88d2t04lom6oqi>

Our expectation is that ARRA and CoARA can contribute to the development of modern, diverse universities and transparent, equal merit assessments. In addition, the agreement and coalition can contribute to countering the development of irresponsible (use of indicators in) assessment of research and contribute to the quality development of research.

Furthermore, our work with ARRA will contribute to alignment with the newly adopted guidelines of Open Science by The National Library of Sweden: “A prerequisite for a successful implementation of the guidelines is that open science receives attention and becomes meritorious in the contexts where researchers, individually or in larger constellations, as well as research performing organizations are evaluated and assessed.”<sup>4</sup>

The aim of the present document is to share with the signatories of ARRA, and within Malmö University as well, how we have started the process of reviewing (GAP-analysis) and developing criteria, tools, and processes (Action plan) in line with the commitments.

The GAP-analysis was carried out with the purpose of finding out the gap between the commitments and current practice at Malmö university, and what possible adjustments would be appropriate to introduce in the university's research assessment.

The university also prepared an Action plan that partly coincides with other already planned development work, for example our activities in relation to the EU charter.<sup>5</sup>

The work has been led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Global Engagement and Human Rights as well as the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research and Research Education with support from the research coordinator at the university Executive Office. The Action plan has been prepared in the university's various Advisory boards before decision by the Vice-Chancellor.

The different actions presented in the Action plan will take place within the regular organizational structures and includes different units/groups within

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<sup>4</sup> [file:///C:/Users/AN3198/Downloads/Nationellariklinjerforoppnvetenskap%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/AN3198/Downloads/Nationellariklinjerforoppnvetenskap%20(2).pdf).

<sup>5</sup> In 2023, the university was awarded the EU's certifying HR Excellence in Research award; <https://mau.app.box.com/s/iazvikba03liwaym1j1s2qjpn3yhd5xn>

the University. Most of our actions include more than one responsible unit, and we think this will ensure a sustainable implementation process where the proposed actions are embedded in all necessary processes.

Based on the GAP-analysis, Malmö University's overall assessment is that current policy and procedures at the university – for example our Quality assurance framework for research, our Appointment Rules and the university's Qualifications Portfolio – are very much in line with the ARRA commitments.

Our view is that the choice of assessment method should be adapted to the evaluation level and evaluation object. Scientific expert review (peer review) is particularly suitable for assessment on individual and project level. Responsible use of quantitative indicators can be integrated in peer review at more aggregated levels (such as research environments and organizational level). Overall, qualitative assessments can include quantitative measurements, but these should always be interpreted and contextualised in relation to norms in the particular scientific field.

The university does not partake in assessments of research activities in accreditation processes and rankings etc. on university level. In assessments of research units within the university, such as research groups, research centres, departments, the university has a responsible use of quantitative indicators. Furthermore, appointments of professors, senior lecturers and associate senior lecturers are prepared through a peer review process. This method is also used for promotions. However, when assessing individual researchers (assessments of research during recruitment and career promotion), there might be some challenges in the actual implementation of policies and procedures. With this in mind, we have drawn up certain actions even in cases where we have not identified a clear gap.

As a member of CoARA, Malmö University agrees to communicate progress made and exchange good practice with other members of the Coalition. A key method for achieving this is through the formation of an action plan for reform, which all members of CoARA are required to produce. Our Action plan cover the period 2024–2027. However, the plan is a living document and, as such, it will be updated within the four-year time frame.

## **GAP-analysis**

The GAP-analysis is delimited to the core commitments (1–4), i.e. it does not include the supporting commitments (5–10). We have used a four-grade scale to assess the gap between the commitments and current practice at

Malmö University: 4 = fully implemented, 3= almost but not fully implemented, 2 = partially implemented, 1 = insufficiently implemented.

*1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research*

Assessment: Grade 4.

All Malmö university relevant policies and procedures are aligned with this commitment.

The commitment is embedded in the Malmö University Strategy 2025<sup>6</sup>:

“The five academic values of academic freedom, academic integrity, academic quality, academic accountability and academic collegiality form the very foundation of the entire University[.]”

“At Malmö University, the particularities and traditions of the different disciplines are respected and given the opportunity to be clearly expressed.”

The commitment is also aligned with the Quality assurance frameworks for research (and research education)<sup>7</sup>, and guidelines on establishment and evaluation of doctoral education subjects<sup>8</sup>.

The commitment is aligned with the Appointment Rules at Malmö University<sup>9</sup>, the University's Qualifications Portfolio<sup>10</sup>, Guidelines for the

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<sup>6</sup> Malmö University Strategy 2025 <https://mau.app.box.com/s/mrrmuih3yzjsq9kkt88d2t04lom6oaqi>

<sup>7</sup> Quality assurance framework for research  
<https://mau.app.box.com/s/6lxnu79rpk46qrlua3ts08oo27musgr0>

Quality Assurance Framework for third cycle education  
<https://mau.app.box.com/s/0u1b4hs0ca97tb2na7fo901wikcj4x9u>

<sup>8</sup> Evaluation of doctoral education subjects  
<https://mau.app.box.com/s/38t8xqr8n2svaemyy1lecedtjsjwnf8l>; Establishment and withdrawal of doctoral education subjects <https://mau.app.box.com/s/l9uvkf7zjycjce2vz8av1l0d24iwcq1x>

<sup>9</sup> Appointment Rules at Malmö University  
<https://mau.app.box.com/s/igkuki2yk67n73e4hk44vdgwe5snw9wr>

<sup>10</sup> University's Qualifications Portfolio  
<https://mau.app.box.com/s/ff5g4n4ghqu4f4qqbred7drxxq2hpi5l>

appointment of docent (associate professors) at Malmö University<sup>11</sup>, Agenda för global engagement 2021–2026<sup>12</sup>, and the University's plan for Gender equality and equal opportunities<sup>13</sup>.

However, we have identified a need to promote Academic Citizenship at the University in order to avoid instrumentalism in academic work such as inappropriate performance measurement and unequal academic housework.

We have also identified a need to develop a more integrated way of working with collaborative merits, and in relevant cases academic leadership throughout the entire recruitment and promotion processes.

*2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators*

Assessment: Grade 3.

All Malmö university relevant policies and procedures are aligned with this commitment.

The commitment is also aligned with the Quality assurance frameworks for research (and research education)<sup>14</sup>. The Quality assurance framework for research:

“Peer review is a fundamental tool for promoting and assessing research quality. It is used, for example, in the context of funding and award applications, assessment in postgraduate education, and decisions about employment, promotion and admission.”

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<sup>11</sup> Guidelines for the appointment of *docent* (associate professors) at Malmö University  
<https://mau.app.box.com/s/xtp2ce01r4847ti3f4c63brh32zyji21>

<sup>12</sup> Agenda for Global Engagement 2021-2026  
<https://mau.app.box.com/s/tyi6qfranqewxwn6n78pfp27ut0b1212>

<sup>13</sup> Gender equality and equal opportunities, Malmö University's plan for 2022-24  
<https://mau.app.box.com/s/cjo7gakryjaddjwrz6x16ipzs8t3cj7z>

<sup>14</sup> Quality assurance framework for research  
<https://mau.app.box.com/s/6lxnu79rpk46qrlua3ts08oo27musgr0>

Quality Assurance Framework for third cycle education  
<https://mau.app.box.com/s/0u1b4hs0ca97tb2na7fo901wikcj4x9u>

“At a university-wide level, research quality is assessed through quality dialogues and external evaluation.”

”Peer-led, external evaluation is also used in the implementation and assessment of those University-wide initiatives that lie outside this framework of recurring evaluations.”

The university’s academic career assessment is very much in line with this commitment, for example the Appointment Rules at Malmö University<sup>15</sup> states the following:

“In order to guarantee that operations maintain the highest possible quality, Malmö University needs staff who possess a multitude of qualities and competencies. To ensure a consistent academic quality, the appointments of professors, senior lecturers and associate senior lecturers are prepared through a peer review process. This method is also used for promotions. Other academic appointments can also be prepared through peer review processes. The peer review process is performed by the University’s Academic Appointments Boards in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.”

Policies and procedures for recruitment and promotion are in place, but how does the actual implementation of merit assessment work? We have identified a gap in the employment of recruitment- and promotion related assessments, guidelines, i.e. how academic evaluators/experts use the recruitment templates and steering documents. There might be a risk that an increasing use of quantitative assessment in research will crowd out the qualitative evaluation of research quality and other important competencies and/or merits of the researcher in the University's Qualifications Portfolio.<sup>16</sup> There is also a risk for increased use of quantitative data due to increased use of AI in merit assessments.

A central element of Malmö University resource allocation model for research<sup>17</sup> is a quantitative assessment of the faculties’ performance. There is a risk for irresponsible use of quantitative indicators (bibliometrics, external funds) in the resource allocation model.

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<sup>15</sup> Appointment Rules at Malmö University

<https://mau.app.box.com/s/igkuki2yk67n73e4hk44vdgwe5snw9wr>

<sup>16</sup> University's Qualifications Portfolio

<https://mau.app.box.com/s/ff5g4n4ghqu4f4qqbred7drxxq2hpi5l>

<sup>17</sup> The Malmö university resource allocation model

<https://mau.app.box.com/s/64eehj4cpxin8m69ck8v>

*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*

Assessment: Grade 3.

ARRA is somewhat unclear about what is meant by appropriate uses of quantitative assessments. Malmö University does not focus on measurements such as Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index in evaluations of research environments and organisations or in individual merit assessments and promotions. However, as a part of a qualitative assessment, quantitative data can be used according to norms in a specific scientific field.

We have identified a gap in the instructions of the University's Qualifications Portfolio<sup>18</sup>:

“3.2 Scientific production

A brief descriptive summary and critical self-reflection on the scientific production of the applicant (max 200 words as well as links or appendix). For example: Compilations of scientific matrixes (e.g. number of citations, h-index)”

In our view, differences between research fields in assessing research must be allowed – and responsible use of h-index must be allowed in specific cases, but the current instruction in the Qualifications Portfolio is an unnecessary encouragement of an instrumental evaluation practice of research.

*4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment*

Assessment: Grade 4.

Malmö University adopts a critical stance towards rankings of research organisations.

Rankings are not used in research assessment and is not mentioned or discussed in policies and procedures.

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<sup>18</sup> University's Qualifications Portfolio

<https://mau.app.box.com/s/ff5g4n4ghqu4f4qqbred7drxxq2hpi5l>

## Action Plan

Our Action plan will cover the period 2024 – 2027.

*1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research*

Action: Expand the knowledge of Academic Citizenship through e.g. leadership training programmes and open seminars (Responsible: Pro Vice-Chancellor of Global Engagement and Human Rights and HR Department; Continuously throughout 2024 and 2025)

Action: Follow-up on collaborative merits throughout the entire recruitment and promotion processes, including templates for requirement profiles on collaborative merits, and in relevant cases academic leadership (Teacher Proposal Committees, HR Department, Head of departments)

*2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators*

Action: Include the theme of responsible use of quantitative indicators in HR Department's courses for all members and substitutes in Teacher Proposal Committees (HR Department and Teacher Proposal Committees, continuously throughout 2027).

Action: Develop guidelines for AI (Artificial Intelligence) in instructions and templates for merit assessments. These will be developed in relation to policies from research funding bodies, e.g. Swedish Research Council (Teacher Proposal Committees and HR Department, 2025).

Action: Follow-up and review of the university central resource allocation model for research in relation to the University's External Research Assessment, ERA26 (Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research and Research Education, University Executive Office, 2027)

*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*

Action: Update the University's Qualifications Portfolio – add instructions on the importance of responsible use of JIF, h-index and other quantitative measures of research quality (University management level, 2027)

*4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment*



No Action.

*5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to*

Action: Continued resources for the development/reforms of assessment of research, through the working group for academic career paths (Arbetsgruppen för akademiska karriärvägar) (University Management level, 2025).

Action: Allocate resources to carry out the University's External Research Assessment, ERA26 (Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research and Research Education, University Executive Office, Throughout 2026 and 2027)

Action: Implement the EU charter Action plan<sup>19</sup> (HR Department, Throughout 2024)

*6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes*

Action: Review the University's External Research Assessment from 2019 (ERA19)<sup>20</sup> and develop research assessment criteria, tools, and processes for ERA26 (Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research and Research Education, University Executive Office, 2024 and throughout 2025)

Action: Update the Quality assurance framework for research (Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research and Research Education, University Executive Office, 2024)

Action: Follow up GAP-analysis as part of ERA26, and update Action plan (Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research and Research Education, University Executive Office, 2026 and 2027)

*7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use*

Action: Incorporate CoARA and ARRA in ongoing work on research and innovation culture at Malmö University, for example in the forthcoming

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<sup>19</sup> <https://mau.app.box.com/s/iazvikba03liwaym1j1s2qjpn3yhd5xn>

<sup>20</sup> <https://mau.app.box.com/s/hbqst5lhq6xu3ovvoldlienxu05n446t>

University Strategy from 2026 and onwards (University management level, 2025)

*8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition*

Action: Join the National Chapter of CoARA in Sweden (Pro Vice-Chancellor of Global Engagement and Human Rights, 2024)

Action: Play an active role in SUHF:s and EUA:s Academic career assessment Advisory Boards (Pro Vice-Chancellor of Global Engagement and Human Rights, 2025)

Action: Implement Academic career assessment guidelines at Malmö University (Pro Vice-Chancellor of Global Engagement and Human Rights, University Executive Office, HR Department 2025 and 2026)

*9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments*

Action: Publish our CoARA Action Plan on the web pages once approved (University Management level, 2024)

Action: Annually report back on progress via the Action plan and update it as necessary (University Management level, annual reports and update of GAP-analysis and Action plan 2027).

*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*

Action: In the development of the evaluation policy and practices, international literature, make sure that best practices, etc., are taken into account (University Management level, continuously throughout 2027)