Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA) – University of Copenhagen Action Plan

The University of Copenhagen (UCPH) signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment on 17 November 2022.

Our goal is that the assessment of research and researchers recognises all types of research outputs, practices and activities, and takes into account different career paths and personal circumstances when assessing the quality and impact of research. The University of Copenhagen is a large university established in 1479 organised in six faculties, 36 departments and hundreds of research centres. Mono and multidisciplinary research is carried out within many scientific fields by a variety of researchers engaging in both basic research, clinical research and research in collaboration with domestic and international partners from both academia, industry and society in general. Researchers at the university as a group represent great variation both regarding the scientific traditions they represent and the framework conditions they are facing.

The University of Copenhagen wants to be the best place for curiosity-driven research and for generating ideas with the potential to make major scientific breakthroughs. We will embrace bold ideas, unconventional experiments and innovative partnerships – challenged and tested by peers in accordance with scientific standards. The best research requires time for immersion, and we want to create possibilities for our researchers to work on the best ideas.

As a signatory to the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA), the University of Copenhagen is sharing with the scientific community this Action Plan on how we take inspiration from the Agreement's 10 core commitments and have started the process of reviewing and developing criteria, tools and processes in line with these.

The University of Copenhagen has a strong history of engagement with responsible research assessment. However, the University continuously strives to do better and to contribute nationally and internationally to this important agenda. Our Action Plan therefore embeds existing RRA practice at UCPH and outlines further actions to ensure we continuously remain abreast of best practice and develop our own practice.

The ARRA Action plan of the University of Copenhagen contains two main elements with subsections.

1. UCPH career paths for academic staff: Continued gathering of experience, and further development of broad criteria for recognising merit in positions as assistant professor, associate professor and full professor introduced by the University of Copenhagen in 2020. Also, the continuous and further development of practices for attracting academic talent having internationally recognisable transparent and well-anchored career systems for all researchers.

2. Supporting researchers and research: Strategic work to enhance research quality and attract talent by implementing funding mechanisms that promote early stability, foster diversity, and support high-risk, interdisciplinary collaboration.

1.1 Updating of UCPH Criteria for recognising merit

In 2020 UCPH defined six broad overall criteria for recognising merit[1] of assistant professors, associate professors and full professors. The criteria support both rigour and breadth in the University's practice of recognising merit when recruiting academic staff. Clarity and transparency are important for a fair recruitment process, and it is part of the University's equality and diversity effort. The criteria are used in job postings, during job interviews and in assessment committees' work to achieve a broader range of principles for recognising merit and to determine key skills. They are key in the overall managerial assessment in connection with recruitment, as well as in dialogue with academic staff regarding career paths and development, e.g. in connection with yearly Performance and Development Reviews and not least in faculties' and departments' strategic considerations of practice, needs, priorities and ambitions.

In 2025 UCPH has started the process of updating the criteria for recognising merit: The criterion Societal Impact will come to include innovation in all its forms and will have an increased focus. The criterion Teaching will come to include continued education, and the criterion External Funding will be removed as a separate criterion. Instead, the ability to manage projects with external funding will be included in the criterion Leadership.

The update reflects UCPH's wishes to continually review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes to support breadth in the University's practice of assessment, the principles of Open Science and to recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research.

This is also in alignment with UCPH's HR excellence in Research work, which is to be revised and evaluated in 2026.

Implementation of the revised criteria will also be carried out in 2026.

1.2 Establishment and use of UCPH Promotion Programme[2]

An attractive, transparent and well-anchored career system is an objective in the University of Copenhagen's strategic efforts. A key element is to have an internationally recognisable career programme for associate professors. A UCPH model for promotion from associate professor to full professor without advertisement has therefore been developed.

The programme has been in use since 2022 and just undergone a minor evaluation.

A UCPH Faculty Board is monitoring this programme along with UCPH's Tenure Track Programme to ensure a high academic level across the university with a particular focus on gender balance and internationalisation.

UCPH wishes to engage the Faculty Board in RRA work, particularly regarding raising awareness, exchanging practices and experiences to enable mutual learning, evaluating practices, criteria and tools and communicating progress.

UCPH also wishes to further develop the use of the promotion programmes, not least the part concerning assessment of potential, which UCPH considers to be a central part of reforming research assessment and an area that needs some guidance also in the onboarding of international reviewers.

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[1] UCPH Criteria for recognising merit
[2] UCPH Promotion Programme

A full review of the Promotion programme will be carried out in 2027.

1.3 Implementation of a Strategic Framework for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion[3]

UCPH has worked systematically to support diversity since 2007, and many actions and initiatives are in place at the University to promote diversity, equity and inclusion. In 2025 the University Leadership agreed on a Strategic framework for diversity, equity and inclusion 2025-2030. The framework also serves as the UCPH Gender Equality Plan.

The strategic framework stipulates principles and objectives for the diversity, equity and inclusion efforts at UCPH, including the objective to strive for and monitor its progress towards a more diverse research, staff and student population.

The framework sets the strategic direction for both cross-organisational initiatives with a broad impact across UCPH and local initiatives that must be scoped, developed and implemented locally at faculties, departments and units. Among the cross-organisational initiatives, the following support the development towards a broader perspective on research assessment and merit:

- Within the theme of **recruitment and attraction**, initiatives include working with bias awareness raised through the implementation of a software tool that helps flag and reflect on wordings in job announcement texts as a step towards attracting a broader pool of applicants.

- Within the theme of **Gender and diversity in research, education and innovation** initiatives include ensuring more diversity among the academic experts that UCPH's press corps refers the media to for expert statements.

- Within the theme of **Accessibility – in physical environments, language and systems** initiatives include mapping how UCPH's parallel language policy is being implemented in practice.

In addition, all managers with personnel responsibility will in 2026 and onwards undergo guidance and training to help foster their competences in diversity management. The course provides managers with tools to evaluate and assess merits with greater bias awareness, and it equips them with skills to work with norms and culture in order to foster more inclusive research environments.

2.1 Academic freedom and autonomy

As a fundamental commitment guiding all of the UCPH's actions to reform research assessment, there stands the principle of upholding the freedom of scientific inquiry. This encompasses both the organisation's strategic autonomy in relation to financing research and attracting talent, as well as the academic freedom for individual researchers, which is secured by ensuring that assessment frameworks are focused and limited only to those criteria that are truly essential.

UCPH's approach to this work is strategic; academic freedom is a prerequisite for the successful delivery of the University's Strategy 2030. A central part of this commitment involves clarifying, articulating, and communicating UCPH's position on academic freedom for both its researchers and the institution, particularly as it relates to innovation, research collaboration,

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[3] Strategic Framework for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 2025-2030

knowledge dissemination, and public sector services. A specific focus is dedicated to supporting researchers across all career stages, particularly those in non-permanent or initial roles, and fostering freedom within the doctoral education environment.

Three tracks are dedicated to this work in 2025–2027 to develop and realise initiatives in a collaboration between researchers, staff, and students at UCPH.

2.2 Supporting researchers and research

UCPH is dedicated to enhancing its ability to attract and support top research talent, including those from abroad, particularly during the initial phase of their employment at the University.

A new funding mechanism for allocating start packages is currently being developed for particularly talented researchers whose work addresses strategic gaps in UCPH's research profile. This mechanism will provide an early guarantee of funding and support, allowing researchers to rapidly commence their work without immediate reliance on external funding sources. By providing this stability and focusing on the researcher's future potential alongside their track record, UCPH is taking steps to ensure that the assessment of individual contexts and careers is properly accounted for in the early stages of a researcher's appointment.

As part of the University's strategic work, UCPH will explore the possibility of better guiding newly arrived international researchers through the national funding landscape. Furthermore, UCPH will explore the possibility of better supporting leadership capabilities in early career researchers, a key step in ensuring inclusive practices and broadening the spectrum of talent within research leadership roles across the institution. This directly contributes to recognising the diversity of contributions in research.

UCPH is committed to strategically dedicating institutional funds to research areas that may have limited access to external financing. To support this, a new programme for interdisciplinary research collaborations is being launched. This programme will allocate funds to unconventional or frontier research projects and partnerships, thereby explicitly valuing originality of ideas and supporting team science and collaboration across diverse research domains and career stages. The evaluation is centred on how applicant groups demonstrate that their diverse research practices and expertise create a complementary and valuable contribution to the project's overall aims. By using these criteria, UCPH is ensuring that assessment acknowledges and rewards the full diversity of contributions inherent in modern research.

Oversight of Action Plan

UCPH is committed to the continuous monitoring of the initiatives detailed within this action plan. This oversight will be conducted through the established forums and operational tracks in which the work on these initiatives is progressed.

Approved by the University Leadership on 7 January 2026.