

# Working Group Principles

## CoARA Working Group – Experiments in Assessment

### Mission

The mission of this working group is to form an incubator for experimental ideas that advance research assessment towards a more holistic and inclusive definition of quality and excellence.

### **Principle 1. We will empower ourselves and others to create change in research assessment**

The Experiments in Assessment CoARA Working Group has the core mission to form an incubator for experimental ideas that advance research assessment towards a more holistic and inclusive definition of quality and excellence. To accomplish this mission, we will need to enable change in research assessment.

We understand that changing research assessment depends on the decisions, behaviours, contingencies, values, and cultures from a very broad array of stakeholders. We also understand that some individuals or stakeholders are in more comfortable positions than others to be able to change assessment processes. While we cannot – and do not aim to – forcefully impose changes on research assessment, we aim to support individuals within and outside the Working Group to be able to initiate change and to make a difference in research assessment in their own settings.

To embody this principle, we will involve a diverse range of stakeholders – including those with different levels of powers and resources – in building and reviewing our work (see Principle 6). This will ensure that our outputs and efforts provide concrete tips that help empower individuals, institutions, and other stakeholders to change and improve research assessment in a diversity of settings (see Principle 5). Within the Working Group, we will also help each other to accomplish our aim, supporting members who may face obstacles in the process. We will keep this empowerment principle at the forefront of our work.

### **Principle 2. We will be bold and courageous, thinking broadly beyond traditional definitions of quality and excellence**

With the current reform of assessment well underway, several institutions, funders, and research groups have begun implementing changes in the way they assess researchers and research. Nonetheless, implementing changes in research assessment is daunting, and evidence for the success of these changes is often absent. The *raison d'être* of our Working Group is to experiment with research assessment in order to improve the way research and researchers are recognised and assessed. To enable real 'out-of-the-box' ideas on how we can change research assessment, we will be bold and courageous, enabling ourselves to experiment beyond the currently used assessment methods.

To embody this principle, we will voice our ideas without filters, daring to go beyond the usual frame, challenging and pushing ourselves further in our thinking. We will provide concrete and realistic outputs that result from the work of this Working Group, but we

will, wherever possible, push ideas as far as possible to explore what an ideal view of research assessment could look like. In the pilots within the Working Group, we also commit to experiment in areas that may not have been addressed before and aim to bring new avenues that could change research assessment for the better.

### **Principle 3. We will be open and honest with each other, creating a safe space for discussion and feedback**

A crucial point of our Working Group is the need for all members to feel safe to express themselves fully with one another. We understand and value the role of this safe space in upholding our other objectives, and we will ensure that we all contribute towards it.

To uphold this principle, the Working Group chairs will consistently request feedback from members to understand how the Working Group discussions could be improved. For more personal inputs, online tools such as MURAL or Mentimeter will be used in anonymous mode so that all members feel able to provide input honestly and openly. In joining the Working Group, we all agreed to aim for a 'Yes, and' approach to approach each other's comments in a constructive way rather than a 'No, but' limiting approach. We will all help to uphold this safe space, working together with the group and co-chairs to further improve and promote this collaborative and supportive atmosphere.

### **Principle 4. We will reflect on the work we do, ensuring that we do no harm to the community**

Experimenting with assessment is a crucial step towards improving the way researchers are assessed, but experiments are not always successful. The essence of our work will be to provide scope for experimentation, but also to provide ways to assess the benefits resulting from these experimentations as well as the potential harm that they can create. Our mission is to advance research assessment towards a more holistic and inclusive definition of quality and excellence, but in doing so, we will follow the fundamental aim of doing no harm.

To uphold this objective, we will dedicate time throughout the activities of the Working Group to brainstorm the possible consequences of proposed changes in research assessment. We will make use of existing techniques such as guidance mentioned in the SCOPE report and equality impact assessments to anticipate unintended consequences and to identify potential risks of our proposed work. One advantage of our Working Group is also its low threshold for reporting possible issues and mistakes with new methods in research assessment. As an experimental Working Group, we have the space and capacity to transparently report mistakes, failures, and possible harm, without fear of repercussion or reputational risks. We intend to take advantage of this privileged position to be as transparent as possible on any anticipated issues of harm that could result from proposed changes in research assessment.

**Principle 5. We will keep diversity, inclusion, and adaptability in the forefront of our thinking, seeking reach and support a breadth of different groups, stakeholders, disciplines, to and approaches**

We already mentioned in Principle 2 that our group would aim to empower change through a broad diversity of stakeholders. We will also aim to propose changes and experimentations which can be applied to different networks, resources, and groups. We recognise that changes in research assessment are not equally accessible to everyone, and we will aim to make our outputs and proposals as adaptable to different settings as possible.

To uphold this principle, we will involve a broad diversity of stakeholders, groups, and disciplines within the Working Group as well as throughout our creative and review processes (see Principle 6). We will actively seek feedback on the challenges that specific individuals and settings may face when implementing the changes we propose and using our work, and we will aim to propose accommodations to enable a broad diversity of settings, disciplines, approaches and individuals to use our work. We recognise that it may not always be possible to adapt for all scopes and environments, and we will aim to provide enough details in our work to at least allow users to identify whether the changes could apply in their settings. For instance, we will provide concrete details on anticipated resource requirements. On another level, our Working Group will also make efforts to keep an open mind towards shifting definitions of broad concepts such as impact, quality, and excellence. Given the transition phase we are currently facing, these broad concepts that guide our work may substantially differ between perspectives, cultures, individuals, but also time. We will aim to define unambiguous terms but to remain adaptable so we do not create another narrow concept of what good research looks like.

**Principle 6. We will work with the community as well as for them**

As a final principle, we will work with, as well as for, the community, in a larger sense. The outcomes of this Working Group are not meant for personal members' benefit, but rather for the benefit of the research community broadly defined. We will seek input from a great diversity of stakeholders to adapt and enrich our work so that it is adaptable (Principle 5) and appropriately anticipates and minimises harm (Principle 4).

To uphold this principle, we will involve members of the research community throughout the different stages of our work. This will be done through leveraging the extensive networks of our members and CoARA, as well as through making an effort to reach out to and implicate people working in research ecosystems throughout the world, ensuring as many perspectives as possible feed into our efforts. . The work of our Working Group will embrace co-creative principles and involve but also connect diverse communities within and beyond CoARA.