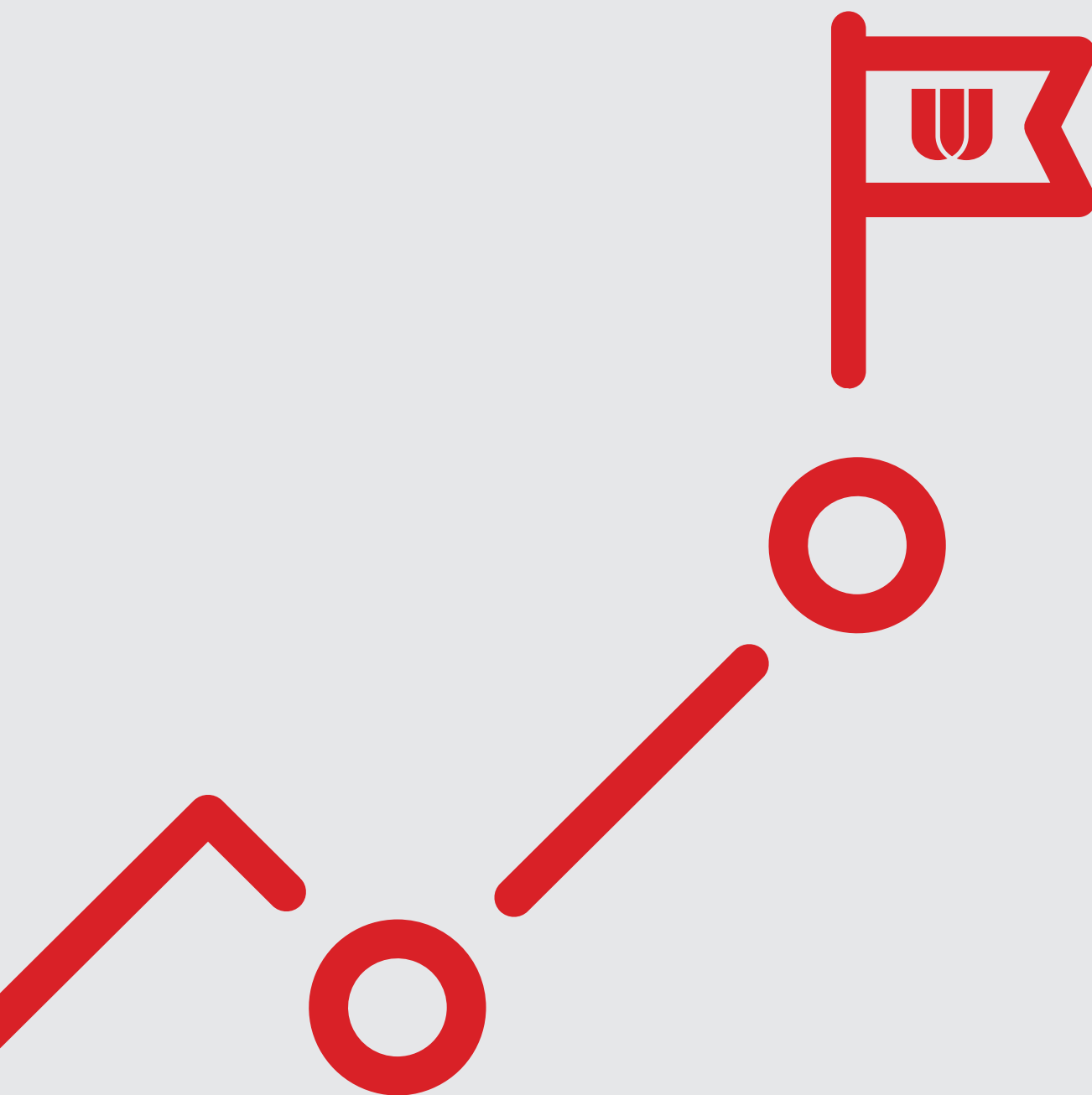

CRUE Action Plan at the Coalition for Advancing Research Assesment (CoARA)



Índice

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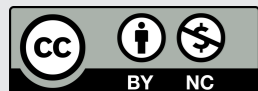
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1. Introduction	4
2. CRUE's Membership in CoARA and Action Plan	6
2.1 Commitments and Proposed Actions	8
2.2. Implementation of CRUE's Action Plan (2024-2027) and Timeline	9

1. Introduction

The Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE) is a non-profit association founded in 1994 that brings together 77 Spanish universities—50 public and 27 private institutions. It serves as the main interlocutor between these universities and the Government of Spain, playing a key role in all regulatory developments affecting higher education institutions and their research activities. Moreover, CRUE fosters initiatives to strengthen relationships with the productive and social sectors, as well as institutional partnerships both nationally and internationally. Its mission includes enhancing the role of Spanish universities, supporting academic quality, and integrating the Spanish University System (SUE) into the European Higher Education Area.

CRUE considers it essential to emphasize the quality and diversity of the research conducted by universities within the Spanish University System (SUE). Its participation in initiatives such as the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)¹, is crucial for implementing new evaluation policies that acknowledge the diversity of research careers and the broader impact of research outcomes beyond scientific publications. In line with this commitment to research quality and the reform of research evaluation systems for researchers and institutions, CRUE co-leads the Spanish National Chapter of CoARA alongside ANECA, CSIC, and ISCIII, driving progress towards a fairer and more comprehensive assessment of academic and research activities.

CoARA, initially launched in Europe with the support of the European Commission, is now a global initiative with a collaborative and shared-learning approach aimed at promoting more accurate and fair evaluation policies. This commitment to evaluation reform is reflected in the 2022–2024 policy agenda of the European Research Area (ERA)², with one of its specific outcomes being the establishment of a coalition of institutions committed to adopting a new approach and advancing the reform of research assessment.

In the field of research, CRUE plays a key role in driving the modernization of evaluation processes within Spanish universities, promoting the need for fairer, more transparent, and pluralistic assessments. These processes aim to go beyond traditional quantitative indicators, such as journal impact factors or the h-index, using them responsibly and balancing them with qualitative indicators. This commitment is essential to ensure that the scientific output of Spanish universities is assessed not only by its quantity but also by its quality and academic relevance.



+70%

Over 70% of scientific research in Spain is conducted within its universities.



21.409

Between 2013 and 2022, Spanish universities secured 21,409 projects through the National R&D Plan

Internationally, they received significant funding from Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, supplemented by regional funding to support key research areas. These financial resources are essential to advancing CRUE's mission of strengthening research and academic output within the Spanish university system.

¹ Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). Available at: <https://coara.eu/>

² European Research Area Policy Agenda: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ec_rtd_era-policy-agenda-2021.pdf

2. CRUE's Membership in CoARA and Action Plan



Member institutions of the Coalition are required to accept and adopt the commitments outlined in the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA)³, while respecting each institution's autonomy. By endorsing the agreement and joining the Coalition, institutions commit to defining their own Action Plan within the first year of membership and implementing it over the following four years. This approach contributes to advancing the reform of research assessment while considering their specific contexts and priorities.

CRUE signed the Agreement (ARRA) and joined CoARA in December 2022, participating in this community of institutions from its inception. Through this membership, CRUE commits to promoting and fostering new approaches to research assessment.

The agreement promoted by CoARA (ARRA) includes four key commitments and six supporting commitments, with the effective implementation of these commitments depending on the specific characteristics of each institution.

The four key commitments are:



Evaluation processes for the recruitment, promotion, and incentivization of teaching and research staff must recognize a greater plurality of contributions and research careers.



Discontinue the inappropriate use of bibliometric indicators inferred from the journals where scientific articles are published, particularly journal impact factors and the h-index.



Evaluation must be based on the use of qualitative methods, supported by the responsible use of quantitative indicators.



Avoid the use of university or research organization rankings in research evaluation processes.

The six supporting commitments are:

1. Commit the necessary resources to reform research assessment.
2. Review and develop criteria, tools, and evaluation processes.
3. Increase awareness and provide information about the reform, offering transparent training on evaluation criteria and processes.
4. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition.
5. Communicate progress made (in adherence to the principles and implementation of the commitments).
6. Evaluate practices, criteria, and tools based on robust evidence and the current state of meta-research, making the data publicly available.

CRUE's Action Plan for the implementation of CoARA will focus on the supporting commitments, as CRUE, by its institutional nature as an association of universities, does not directly conduct research evaluation processes. However, it plays a fundamental role in supporting and promoting initia-

tives that improve the Spanish University System (SUE) in all its dimensions and acts as an essential cohesion element between public and private universities and public policies, driving reforms that enhance educational quality, research, and/or internationalization.

³ Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (2022): https://coara.eu/app/uploads/2022/09/2022_07_19_rra_agreement_final.pdf

2.1. Commitments and Proposed Actions

Outlined below are the proposed lines of work for CRUE's Action Plan within the CoARA framework for 2024–2027. These actions are designed to align with the supporting commitments adopted when CRUE joined CoARA, while also encouraging the implementation of the key commitments outlined in the agreement. The plan seeks to engage CRUE member universities—many of which are also individual members of CoARA⁴—in a coordinated effort to promote meaningful changes in research assessment. Additio-

nally, the initiatives within this plan reflect CRUE's active participation in the Spanish National Chapter, which serves as a collaborative platform to exchange ideas and best practices among Spanish institutions⁵ and other CoARA members globally. These efforts aim to strengthen the Spanish University System's alignment with international standards in research evaluation while fostering a culture of transparency, fairness, and inclusivity.

Compromiso de apoyo

#5 Commit resources to reform research assessment as necessary to achieve the organizational changes required.

Acciones propuestas

ACTION 1: Establish a transversal CRUE Commission for CoARA, with technical support from CRUE's General Secretariat, to advance the actions and commitments undertaken upon joining CoARA.

#6 Review and develop criteria, tools, and processes for research assessment.

ACTION 2: Co-lead the Spanish National Chapter within CoARA to collaboratively develop criteria, tools, and processes among Spanish stakeholders.

ACTION 3: CRUE's participation as a promoter in the working group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment (ACA), coordinated by the European University Association (EUA).

#7 Raise awareness about research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on evaluation criteria, processes, and their proper use.

ACTION 4: Organize and participate in meetings, discussion forums, and webinars to raise awareness about the reform agreement and CoARA, as well as its progress, among CRUE universities and their academic communities.

Develop and disseminate publications and reports to promote the reform agreement and CoARA, as well as updates on their progress.

#8 Exchange practices and experiences to facilitate mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition.

ACTION 5: Conduct mapping and facilitate the exchange of best practices in alignment with the agreement among CRUE universities (via surveys, reports, etc.) to promote mutual learning. This initiative will generate a collection of resources and interactions to share best practices from CoARA's working groups and national chapters.

2.2. Implementation of CRUE's Action Plan (2024–2027) and Timeline

The Action Plan will be implemented between 2024 and 2027. Given CRUE's extensive collaboration since the inception of CoARA, the Action Plan also incorporates activities carried out during the 2022–2024 period.

► ACTION 1. Establishment of the CRUE Commission for CoARA.

In March 2023, CRUE established a dedicated commission to address issues related to the Reform of Research Assessment, the CRUE Commission for Open Science, and the CRUE-I+D+i Executive Committee, as well as the CoARA Coalition. This Action Plan proposes expanding the commission with the following structure:

Composition

- Representatives from the working group of the CRUE-I+D+i Executive Committee.
- Representatives from the working group of the CRUE-Teaching Executive Committee.
- Representatives from the CRUE Commission for Open Science.

Secretariat

- María Teresa Lozano, Secretary General of CRUE.
- Carlos Contreras, Head of International Projects at CRUE.

Meetings

During the first year, the working group met regularly every three months, with the frequency of meetings increasing as needed, such as for proposal preparation and the organization of workshops and seminars. Regular quarterly meetings will continue throughout the year, as indicated in the timeline.

► ACTION 2. Spanish National Chapter.

Building on the work led by Crue Universidades Españolas and the Ministry of Universities during the launch of the National Forum for the Reform of Research Assessment, held at the University of Barcelona on January 20, 2023, CRUE proposed the creation of a Spanish National Chapter as part of CoARA's ongoing open call to establish National Chapters.

The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) and the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) joined this proposal to establish the Spanish National Chapter as its promoting and coordinating institutions. Together with CRUE, these three entities are leading the Spanish National Chapter, aiming to create a collaborative space for exchanging ideas, experiences, and knowledge, as well as fostering debates and building consensus on topics that support the reform and improvement of research assessment, considering the specific characteristics of the Spanish context. The proposal for the Spanish National Chapter was approved on July 18, 2023.

As of February 2024, the Spanish National Chapter has

successfully recruited 80 institutions, 75% of which have signed the reform agreement and are members of CoARA. Given the mission to integrate and expand the reform of research assessment in Spain, it was decided to include both CoARA members and non-members in the National Chapter. This approach allows the Chapter to continue providing guidance and ensures that each institution, depending on its level of readiness, can join CoARA freely when it deems appropriate.

In terms of the types of institutions that make up the Spanish National Chapter, there are 50 universities alongside CRUE, representing 66% of the membership. Eleven research centers and their associations account for 14%, while twelve national and regional evaluation agencies constitute 16% of the representation. Additionally, it is noteworthy that 3% of the members are private foundations, academies, and other associations.

The work of the Spanish National Chapter is planned to span three years, starting with the launch event held on February 9, 2024. The mission of the CoARA Spanish Na-

⁴ For list of Spanish institutions that are members of CoARA, refer to: <https://coara.eu/agreement/signatories/?category%5B0%5D=spain#signatories>

⁵ Refer to the list of institutions that are members of the Spanish National Chapter at: <https://coara.eu/coalition/national-chapters/coara-national-chapter-spain/>

tional Chapter is to support the reform of research assessment in Spain, recognizing the diverse outcomes, practices, and activities that enhance the quality and impact of research (aligned with CoARA's vision). Additionally, the identified objectives are closely tied to the commitments outlined in the Agreement, particularly commitments 6, 7, and 8, mentioned previously.

The CoARA initiative offers an opportunity to reflect on the research assessment system in Spain and propose improvements aligned with the broader international research community. This will enable research and innovation in Spain to continue advancing in excellence and generating academic and societal impact.

The Spanish National Chapter will enable:

- Planning the objectives to be achieved with the reform in terms of research outcomes and impact in Spain by 2030.
- Co-designing possible evaluation systems with contributions from institutions and organizations within Spain's research and innovation ecosystem.
- Testing the outcomes of this reform through pilot projects at various recipient institutions, considering the impact on evaluation bodies and the evaluated elements: individuals, research units, institutions, and projects.
- Gradually implementing the reform nationally to minimize any negative impact on the research careers currently underway.

► ACTION 3: Participation in the CoARA Working Group on Academic Career Assessment

The European University Association (EUA), together with CRUE and other university associations, has promoted the Working Group on Academic Career Assessment within the framework of CoARA. Together, these associations developed a proposal for a working group aimed at discussing and sharing best practices on evaluation frameworks, criteria, and practices for academic careers, which should recognize parity of esteem between research, teaching, and service to society.

The goal of this group is to develop a flexible and adaptable guide, as well as an evaluation indicator table, that takes into account all the missions of the University and the full range of activities within academic careers. The proposal was approved on July 18, 2023, and the group began its work in October 2023, with a planned duration of two years. This action includes adapting the proposed guides and indicators from the group to the specific case of Spanish universities.

► ACTION 4: Dissemination, Training, and Awareness-Raising Activities on Evaluation Reform.

In line with Commitment 7 of the CoARA Agreement, CRUE proposes leading two main actions:

A) Organization and participation in meetings, discussion forums, and webinars. These events aim to raise awareness about the reform agreement and CoARA, as well as its progress, among CRUE universities and their academic communities. Since March 2022, CRUE has organized the following activities:

- March 7, 2022: Online seminar "Towards a Reform of Research Assessment in Europe," organized by CRUE.

- January 20, 2023: Launch event "National Forum for the Reform of Research Assessment," held at the University of Barcelona.
- June 1–2, 2023: "First Open Science Conference," organized by CRUE at the University of Vigo, featuring specific sessions on Open Science in Europe and the European framework for research assessment.

Additionally, CRUE has participated in the following activities:

- UAM Seminars: Reflections on advancing Open Science in Spanish universities.
- Interview with the EUA on CoARA and gender equality.
- UPCT Workshop: Introduction to Open Science.
- UMU Workshop: Introduction to CoARA.
- UCLM Workshop: Introduction to CoARA.
- UIMP Event: Academic and scientific careers in Spain.
- CoARA Intermediation Event.
- CoARA National Chapters Exchange Forum in Porto.

- Workshop at the University of Almería: ENUIES.
- ESOF2024 Conference.
- Webinar by the CoARA Working Group on Academic Career Assessment.
- CoARA ERIP Launch Meeting.
- Presentation of National Chapters at Linköping University.
- CoARA National Chapters Newsletter.
- CoARA General Assembly 2023.

B) Preparation and dissemination of publications and reports

► ACTION 5: Mapping and Exchange of Best Practices

As part of Commitment 8, CRUE will develop and maintain a repository of best practices implemented by CRUE universities associated with CoARA to promote mutual learning in research assessment. To achieve this, data will be

collected through a survey conducted among these universities, which will serve as a reference to encourage mutual learning.

Compromisos CoARA	Acciones	Period	Milestones	Deliverables
#5 Commit resources to reform research assessment as necessary to achieve the organizational changes required.	<p>ACTION 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment Quarterly meeting Working groups established 	2024 - 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 2023: Formalization of the commission January 2023: First meeting and role planning December 2024: Publication of the Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crue Commission for CoARA constituted Quarterly meetings schedule Quarterly progress reports Crue Action Plan in CoARA 2024-27
#6 Review and develop criteria, tools, and processes for research assessment.	<p>ACTION 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of the coordination committee (ANECA-CRUE-CSIC) Coordination committee meetings Preparation of the proposals for the NCS of CoARA Collaborative exchange among CoARA National Chapters Establishment of the secretariat Working group coordinated by CRUE focused on training and capacity building 	2024 - 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2023: Establishment of the ANECA-CRUE-CSIC coordination Committee February 2024: NCS launch event September 2024: Initial collaboration report Monthly: Coordination committee meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on priorities and institutional need based on the survey Best practices mapping report Analysis report and model proposal Pilot project results Proposal and recommendations for the next phase Monthly progress reports
	<p>ACTION 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch meeting Establishment of the Working Group (WG) Preliminary contribution to the survey (Task 1.1: mapping) Work in the different phases of the project 	2024 - 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2026: First draft of revised models June 2026: Validation of revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop to present results of Phase 1 Results of Phase 2 presented in workshops Final report of contributions from the WG
#7 Raise awareness about research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on evaluation criteria, processes, and their proper use.	<p>ACTION 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization and participation in CoARA events Preparation and dissemination of publications and reports 	2024 - 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 2024: First awareness-raising event Annual: review and evaluation of events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop on the work of CoARA groups Workshop with national cases as examples One annual report prepared by experts
#8 Exchange practices and experiences to facilitate mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition.	<p>ACTION 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping surveys Repository to share best practices 	2024 - 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 2025: launch of the surveys for practice mapping July 2025: creation of the repository 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Webpage dedicated to CoARA at Crue Repository accessible online Semi-annual reports on mapping and repository results

