IMPLEMENTING RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH ASSESSMENT AT RPOs:
A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Responsible Research Assessment (RRA) is about building a research environment where all high-quality contributions and their real-world impact are truly valued, moving beyond simply counting publications or relying on journal popularity.

DORA's new Practical Guide is your essential tool to make this happen, offering flexible, clear steps and real-world examples to help your Research Performing Organization (RPO) foster a more equitable, impactful, and thriving research culture.

Through the guide, learn about:

1

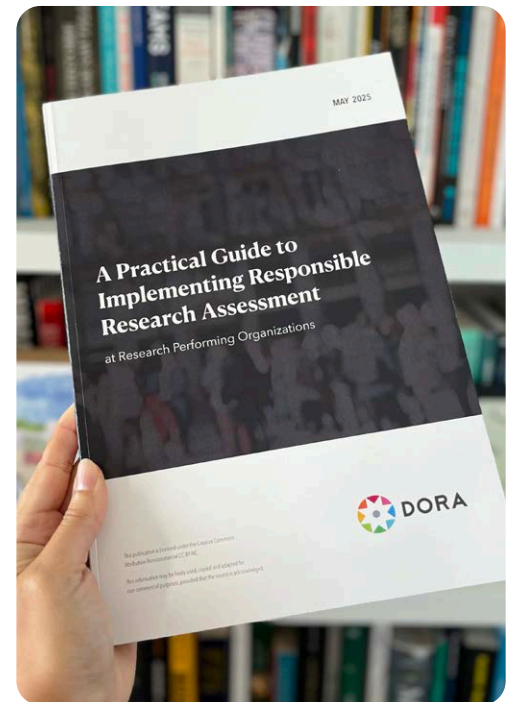The context, goals, and underpinning principles of responsible research assessment (RRA)

3

Four key assessment moments that impact researchers' careers

2

Nine crucial activities for catalyzing research assessment reform

4

Global initiatives and frameworks that align with RRA, shaping the landscape for reform

Get the Guide Today!

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Responsible Research Assessment (RRA) supports and encourages a holistic evaluation of researchers, research processes, outputs, outcomes, and impacts, aligning with an organization's mission and promoting clear, open, and fair criteria.

Here are **nine crucial activities** that research performing organizations (RPOs) can take to catalyze successful RRA approaches. These activities are designed to be discrete and adaptable to your unique needs and context when developing your strategy.

1 Engaging the organization leadership
Secure the "buy-in" of senior leadership

2 Working with the community
Invite active participation of diverse groups

3 Mobilizing resources
Secure people, time & materials

4 Convening a working group/task force
Bring together expertise & broad representation

5 Exploring the landscape for RRA
Understand national & global initiatives

6 Reviewing current assessment practices
Audit practices & identify areas for improvement

7 Developing a strategic vision for RRA
Align with your organization's mission & values

8 Developing effective engagement plans
Maintain clear & consistent communication

9 Monitoring and updating your strategy
Evaluate effectiveness & identify successes

RESOURCE

SPACE Rubric
Gauge your internal capabilities to support RRA efforts.

Want to know more?

DORA works to advance practical and robust approaches to research assessment globally.

This is a brief summary of Chapter 2 of "A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Performing Organizations", which offers practical guidance and tips for RPOs seeking to reform their assessment practices.

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Recruitment, hiring, and promotion decisions

Research performing organizations (RPOs) can make their recruitment, hiring and promotion decisions more fair and transparent. It's about looking at a researcher's whole contributions, not just simple citation numbers or journal names on their CVs. This helps build a stronger and more diverse research community.

Here are some **potential interventions** you can make to recognize and reward diverse talents and support high-quality impactful work:

Setting up hiring & promotion committees

- Inform members of your responsible assessment approaches
- Train members to avoid hidden biases and make fair choices
- Ensure groups are diverse (different backgrounds, experiences, career stages)

Reviewing applications & interviewing

- Use a standard set of criteria for reviewing applications and interviews to make things fair
- Give applicants a chance to see interview topics beforehand so they can think and prepare
- Offer feedback to all applicants, even those not chosen

Writing job ads & application forms

- Clearly state your organization values all kinds of research contributions, like teamwork and societal impact, not just publications
- Ask for information that showcases a broad view of skills and achievements. This could include a "narrative CV" where researchers tell their story instead of just listing papers

After hiring or promoting

- Support new staff with clear plans for their career growth
- Provide training for leaders on your organization's fair assessment methods
- Regularly ask staff for their feedback on how assessment practices are working

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KEY MOMENTS IN RESEARCH AND RESEARCHER ASSESSMENT

DORA

Institutional awards and internal grants

Research performing organizations (RPOs) can try out new, fairer ways of assessing research in their internal awards and grant funding decisions. It's about valuing the intrinsic quality and impact of research and researchers.

Here are some **potential interventions** you can make to support a wider range of valuable contributions that benefits your organization and society:

Deciding on awards and grants

- Make sure awards and grants fit with your organization's main goals
- Make sure there are fair chances for everyone, like younger and underrepresented researchers

Creating application forms

- Ask only information that is directly relevant to the assessment at hand
- Allow applicants to contextualize their achievements (e.g., using narrative formats)

Setting up judging panels or committees

- Give committee members the right tools and information to assess applications fairly
- Train them to avoid hidden biases and consider all kinds of research contributions

After awards and grants are given out

- Get feedback and monitor for patterns in who applies and who receives awards
- Share information openly about how decisions were made

Writing calls for awards and grants

- Make the rules for applying clear, open, and easy to understand
- Ensure the rules don't accidentally stop good people from applying

Talking about winners

- Use language that includes everyone and provide feedback to all applicants
- Highlight diverse contributions and responsible assessment practices that led to the award

Want to know more?

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KEY MOMENTS IN RESEARCH AND RESEARCHER ASSESSMENT

Evaluating internal research units

Research performing organizations (RPOs) can evaluate their internal research groups and teams in a way that is fair, open, and truly shows their value. It's about looking at the whole picture of what a unit does, beyond just simple numbers, to help them grow and improve.

Here are **interventions to consider** to better support diverse research efforts and contributions that align with your organization's mission and values:

Making the rules for evaluation

- Create the rules together with the research units and staff at all levels
- Include how the unit helps society and ensures its work can continue for a long time

Doing the evaluation

- Keep communication open and clear between the evaluators and units
- Focus on how the unit's work promotes high-quality research and values diverse contributions

Preparing for the evaluation

- Encourage units to use the evaluation as a chance to improve their research plans
- Ask for narrative-based self-evaluation reports describing their goals and various contributions

After the evaluation: feedback and learning

- Give units detailed feedback on what went well, what can be improved, and share good ideas
- Make evaluation data publicly available to help others learn and improve

Choosing the evaluation team

- Provide clear instructions, training and support on how to assess fairly
- Include people from outside the organization, e.g. from industry or community groups

RESOURCE

[SCOPE Framework](#)
A step-by-step process designed to help you evaluate responsibly.

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This is a brief summary of Chapter 3, section 3.3, of "A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Performing Organizations", which offers practical guidance and tips for RPOs seeking to reform their assessment practices.

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Developing corporate communications

Effective communication of research quality and its broad impacts is an integral part of responsible research assessment implementation. Research performing organizations (RPOs) should consider how they can align internal and external narrative and identity to match their assessment practices.

Here are **potential interventions** to ensure diverse contributions are recognized and celebrated:

Developing policies & position statements

- Ensure all new and existing policies align transparently with your RRA strategy
- Publicly indicate alignment with DORA, CoARA and other relevant institutional commitments to increase community accountability

Leadership engagement with community

- Organize open town halls and seminars to encourage internal discussions and information exchange on research assessment
- Use various channels to engage all units, disciplines, and career stages

Announcing key appointments & new hires

- Focus on the broad skills, experience, and future potential a new hire brings
- Reinforce the broadened scope of research quality and competence assessment in your procedures

Commentary around national rankings

- Ensure communications about your institution's position in rankings present a holistic view of its strengths and future development
- Clearly explain the data from which rankings are derived and their limitations

Updates from institutional leadership

- Celebrate diverse pathways to impact, such as societal engagement and contributions to policy
- Communicate competencies and activities essential for high-quality and impactful research, including reproducibility, integrity, and openness

RESOURCE

More than Our Rank (MTOR)
A structured way to celebrate broader values and impacts of universities.

Want to know more?

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This is a brief summary of Chapter 3, section 3.4, of "A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Performing Organizations", which offers practical guidance and tips for RPOs seeking to reform their assessment practices.

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GLOBAL INITIATIVES AND EXEMPLARS RELEVANT TO RRA

Responsible Research Assessment (RRA) practices do not live in isolation from other policies and practices at Research Performing Organizations (RPOs). They influence and are influenced by many other important reforms and movements happening at different paces. Understanding and integrating diverse efforts can significantly benefit an organization's RRA journey.

Key initiatives of note include:

1 Initiatives providing leadership and guidance on open science

RRA and open science align by valuing diverse contributions and outputs (like data, software), fostering transparent, inclusive, and equitable research practices and cultures.

Key initiatives include:

UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science

Higher Education Leadership Initiative for Open Scholarship (HELIOS Open)

Barcelona Declaration on Open Research Information

2 Initiatives driving forward research assessment reform

Diverse reform initiatives help inform and strengthen local strategies, avoid fragmentation, and ensure coherence across the global system.

Key initiatives include:

Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

Latin American Forum on Research Assessment (FOLEC-CLACSO)

Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)

More Than Our Rank (MTOR)

SCOPE Framework

Make Data Count

3 Initiatives encouraging a holistic and inclusive view of research

Enabling recognition of diverse contributions and research careers and ensuring all valuable scholarly work is acknowledged connects RRA to advancing equity, diversity, & inclusion (EDI).

Key initiatives include:

Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT)

EDI Caucus (EDICa)

4 Initiatives enabling evidence-based policy and research integrity

Prioritizing rigor, ethics, quality and impact in research assessment connects RRA to initiatives that uphold scientific integrity and produce reliable evidence for societal benefit.

Key initiatives include:

The Hong Kong Principles

The Transforming Evidence Funders Network (TEFN)

Want to know more?

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TOOLS AND STORIES OF CHANGE THROUGH RRA

Research Performing Organizations (RPOs) are increasingly recognizing the need to move beyond traditional, often narrow, assessment metrics to embrace a more holistic and equitable view of researchers and their work. Responsible Research Assessment (RRA) is an umbrella term for new approaches that incentivize, reflect, and reward the diverse characteristics of high-quality research, fostering inclusive research cultures.
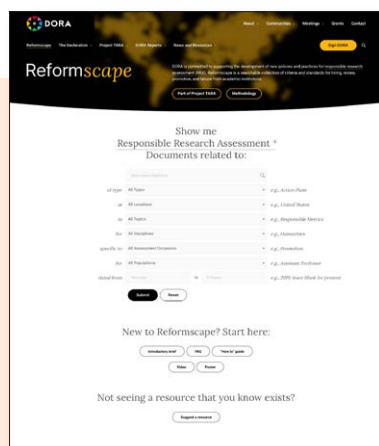
DORA aims to support RPOs in this, offering practical guidance, tools, and real-world examples to inspire meaningful policy and cultural change. **This sheet highlights key resources, case studies, and guidance documents** to help your organization shape and deliver effective RRA practices.

Inspiring Stories of Change: RPOs in Action

Case Studies

DORA curates a repository of case studies documenting key elements of institutional change to improve academic career assessment. These stories provide practical insights into motivations, processes, and challenges faced by organizations implementing RRA.

sfdora.org/dora-case-studies/

Reformscape

Complementing our case studies, Reformscape is an interactive online tool that tracks and showcases criteria and standards used by academic institutions worldwide for hiring, review, promotion, and tenure. It serves as a searchable collection of responsible research assessment practices, providing concrete examples for institutions seeking to reform their own policies.

sfdora.org/reformscape/

Access DORA's full library
of free resources here:
sfdora.org/resource-library/

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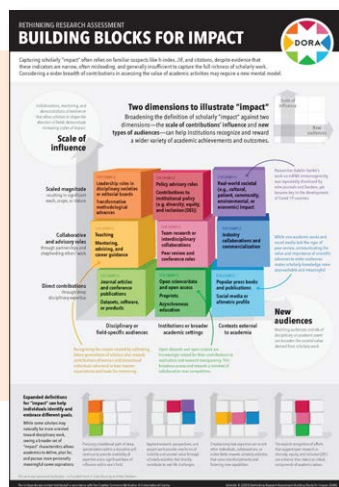
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TOOLS AND STORIES OF CHANGE THROUGH RRA

Practical Guidance & Tools: From Intention to Concrete Action

Building Blocks for Impact

This tool helps to expand the definition of scholarly impact beyond traditional measures. It encourages recognizing diverse contributions by considering the scale of influence and new types of audiences, such as societal value, interdisciplinary work, and contributions to open science.

bit.ly/Blocks-Impact

Unintended Cognitive and Systems Biases & Debiasing Committee Composition and Deliberative Processes

These resources provide strategies to counteract institutional implications of cognitive biases on academic assessment and to include **more diverse perspectives in evaluation processes**. They highlight how biases can manifest in academic assessment and offer practical approaches to promote equitable decisions.

bit.ly/Unintended-Biases   bit.ly/Debiasing-Committee

Guidance on Responsible Use of Indicators

bit.ly/DORAindicators

This guidance helps organizations use quantitative indicators responsibly, advising against the inappropriate use of journal- and publication-based metrics like the Journal Impact Factor (JIF). It advocates for a balanced approach to assessment that prioritizes quality and context over mere quantity.

Want to know more?

DORA works to advance practical and robust approaches to research assessment globally.

This is a brief summary of the resources and tools highlighted in "A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment at Research Performing Organizations", which offers practical guidance and tips for RPOs seeking to reform their assessment practices.

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