



VILNIAUS | HIGHER EDUCATION
KOLEGIJA | INSTITUTION

Action plan for the implementation commitments under the agreement on the reform of scientific research assessment 2025–2028

Introduction and overview

In autumn 2023, Vilniaus kolegija / Higher Education Institution (VIKO) was the first Applied Higher Education Institution in Lithuania to join the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) and the agreement. This agreement on research assessment reform sets out a common direction for changes in the assessment practices of research, researchers and research organisations, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality and impact of research. The agreement sets out the principles, commitments and deadlines for reform, as well as the principles of the coalition for organisations wishing to cooperate in implementing the changes.

The signatories to the agreement commit to a shared vision that the evaluation of research, researchers and research organisations **should recognise the diversity of outcomes, practices and activities that maximise the quality and impact of research**. This requires a qualitative assessment, in which peer review is of paramount importance.

The agreement and the coalition-based reform movement aim to create an inclusive and collaborative space in which to work together towards higher quality, greater impact and a more effective and inclusive research system. It is a platform for testing and experimentation, for developing new evaluation criteria, methods

and tools, for joint critical reflection, for sharing good practices and mutual learning, while fully respecting the autonomy of organisations.

Supported by the work of the coalition, organisations will decide what actions to take to implement their commitments and at what pace to carry out reforms, which may vary depending on the context (e.g. national, disciplinary or individual researchers, research departments and research organisations or research project evaluation) and the strategic goals and mission of each organisation. The CoARA coalition brings together members from around the world.

The coalition's main commitments are closely linked to the VIKO efforts to reform research evaluation. **Our main principles are to increase the transparency of R&D activity and the range of activities carried out by academic staff.**

On 1 January 2028, a provision [30 June 2022 No. XIV-1257, 9 p.] on the determination of the level of research and experimental development

(hereinafter referred to as R&D) and art at VIKO will come into force in the Law on Science and Studies. It is stipulated that the level of research and experimental development at Applied Higher Education Institutions shall be determined by conducting an expert evaluation of R&D and artistic activities every 5 years, based on the criteria of the quality, economic and social impact, and prospects of R&D and artistic activities, in accordance with the procedure established by the Government or its authorised institution. On this basis, the Lithuanian Research Council is organising a pilot expert evaluation of the R&D and artistic activities of Applied Higher Education Institution in 2025, with the aim of enabling them to test the planned procedures in practice and thus prepare for the upcoming expert evaluation in 2028.

Evaluation of R&D and artistic activities and its reform

The applied higher education sector has undergone tremendous changes in recent years. The Law on Science and Studies has clarified the purpose and mission of Applied Higher Education Institutions, with an emphasis on R&D and artistic activities. State funding for these activities and studies is being significantly increased, and applied research and practical activities are becoming a prerequisite for high-quality higher education studies at Applied Higher Education Institutions. With this in mind, Applied Higher Education Institutions, are strengthening their strategic partnerships with business and the public sector, seeking to obtain R&D and art commissions and carry them out to a high

standard, and to familiarise the public and private sectors and the wider community with the results of these activities.

A formal (annual) evaluation of the R&D and artistic activities carried out by Applied Higher Education Institutions, has been conducted for several years. Until 2022, this evaluation was carried out by a commission set up by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (hereinafter referred to as ŠMSM). Representatives of the Lithuanian Research Council (hereinafter referred to as LMT) also participated in this commission. In 2023, the LMT evaluated the results of the Applied Higher Education Institutions R&D and artistic activities for the first time.

By order of the director of VIKO No. V-112 of 4 May 2023 "On the approval of the list of research groups and their coordinators at VIKO by field of science/arts and studies for the 2023/2024 academic year", the research groups in 14 fields of research and 3 fields of arts related to 27 fields of studies were renewed. In 2024, after merging VIKO and

Vilnius College of Technology and Design, the number of research fields increased to 19 and the number of art fields to 4. At the end of 2024, the faculties updated their research fields and topics as well as [their research groups](#). The information provided by the faculties was discussed by the Research and Art Department, and VIKO [priority research areas](#), which reflect the priorities of Horizon Europe and the European Universities Alliance HEROES, were submitted for consideration by the Academic Council in the first quarter of 2025. Students are also included in research groups according to the activities of the research/art direction.

Researchers, taking into account the action plan for the implementation of VIKO strategy for 2021–2025 (later 2026–2030), the 2022–2025 (later 2026–2030) programme of R&D and artistic activities, plan research in their respective research fields and, based on the results, prepare publications and presentations at scientific conferences. Researchers communicate with social partners in the field of research they represent, emphasising that the research should be useful in practice, help solve real problems, improve processes or provide new insights that would be useful in the professional field.

Every year, no later than 1st April, the VIKO Research and Art Department submits data on R&D and artistic work for the previous calendar year to the LMT information system. VIKO is responsible for the accuracy of the data submitted. Data on R&D and artistic activity contracts are not examined if the amounts received are not confirmed by copies of financial transfers. The data

submitted by the Research and Art Department on the specified scientific and art works shall be examined by the LMT in accordance with Article 751(1) of the Law on Science and Studies (No. XIV-654 of 18 November 2021) and Order No. V-1593 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania of 2 September 2021 "On the Implementation of Paragraphs 2.2–2.6 of Resolution No. 149 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 1 March 2017 "On the Implementation of the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania" 2.2–2.6, approved by the Description of the Annual Evaluation of Research and Experimental Development and Artistic Activities of Applied Higher Education Institutions, performs a formal evaluation of the scientific and artistic activities of Applied Higher Education Institutions. Based on the results of this evaluation, Applied Higher Education Institutions are allocated basic funding from the state budget for research and experimental development and artistic activities.

Article 51 of the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania (Publicity of Scientific Activity Results) states that in order to ensure the quality of research carried out with state budget funds, the transparency of the use of state budget funds, increase the possibilities for the use of research results, and encourage scientific progress, all results of scientific research and experimental development carried out in scientific and study institutions using state budget funds must be published publicly using open access methods and means, insofar as this does not conflict with the protection of personal data, intellectual property, professional, commercial or state and service secrets, national security and defense, as well as law enforcement and public security activities. The procedure for implementing open access to the results of research and experimental development shall be established by the LMT.

From 1st January 2029 the provisions of Article 52(4) of the Law on Science and Studies will come

into force, according to which the possibility of pursuing studies at a specific level is linked to the level of R&D and art at Applied Higher Education Institutions, which is determined by an expert evaluation of R&D and art activities carried out every 5 years. All these changes will have a significant impact on the activities of Applied Higher Education Institutions. The possibility of offering

studies will depend on the results of the R&D and art activity assessment, but these measures will improve the quality of studies, the level of R&D and art activity, and create conditions for a larger proportion of graduates to find employment in line with their education.

Key commitments and actions

Commitments	Description of the implementation of commitments and actions	Period
1. Recognize the diversity of contributions to research and careers in research, taking into account the needs and nature of research.	• VIKO represents 19 research and 4 art fields. At the end of 2024, the faculties revised and updated the directions and topics of ongoing research and research groups. • The information provided by the faculties was discussed by the Department of Research and Arts and the VIKO priority research areas were formulated and approved by the Academic Council in 2025. • When planning the workload of R&D and artistic activities, the faculties take into account the needs of the region and social partners, as well as the expected social, economic and cultural impact. • It is planned to develop partnerships in R&D, art and project activities with Lithuanian science, study and business centres, national agencies, associations, confederations, the Vilnius Chamber of Industry, Commerce and Crafts, Vilnius region municipal administrations, and public organisations, encouraging mutual involvement and motivation among partners to solve problems relevant to the country and the region. • It is also planned to develop partnerships with international strategic partners in international HEI and professional networks and to increase the internationalisation of ongoing R&D and artistic activities. • In 2025–2026, training for researchers on the construction and evaluation of the social impact of R&D is planned.	2024–2028

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Commitments	Description of the implementation of commitments and actions	Period
2. Base the evaluation of scientific research primarily on qualitative assessment, with peer review as the main criterion and responsible use of qualitative indicators.	• Develop qualitative research evaluation criteria, improving evaluation procedures, tools and processes accordingly. • In 2024, the forms for lecturer, department, faculty and institutional activity reports were updated and supplemented with aspects related to the qualitative evaluation of R&D and art. • In the future, it is planned to review and improve the forms of these reports in order to base the evaluation even more on qualitative indicators. • In 2026–2027, it is planned to organise an internal qualitative assessment of the R&D and artistic fields, based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. • Using a qualitative expert assessment methodology for research and art, an internal qualitative assessment of research and art results will be carried out in 2026–2027, according to research and art fields. Qualitative indicators will be used to assess the impact of research and art.	2025–2028
3. When assessing academic achievements, scientific research rankings should not be used (the indicators used in these rankings should not be used for evaluating individual researchers).	• Although quantitative assessment is convenient, it does not always reflect the quality, importance and impact of research results on society. • The evaluation of individual researchers will take into account the specificity and diversity of research (e.g. interdisciplinary research, dissemination of research results, etc.) and, in particular, its social impact.	2025–2028
4. Allocate resources for the reform of research evaluation necessary for the organizational changes committed to being implemented.	• Ensure internal material resources for R&D and artistic activities by attracting orders from international and national funds, programmes, companies and other interested parties. • Ensure internal human resources for R&D and art activities. Allocate resources for the creation of research staff positions.	2025–2028

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Commitments	Description of the implementation of commitments and actions	Period
5. Share information about the research evaluation reform and ensure transparency of communication and accessibility to guidelines and training on evaluation criteria, processes and their use.	• Participate in research evaluation reform events (research forum, etc.); • Organise training, seminars and discussions for researchers and administrative staff, covering topics related to CoARA principles.	2025–2028
6. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the coalition. Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on reliable evidence and the latest scientific research, and ensure that data is openly available for evidence gathering and research.	• Promoting collaboration is essential for effective change in assessment processes. • By exchanging insights, practices and strategies with CoARA groups, institutions can learn from each other. This will help to create a unified system. • Active participation in CoARA activities and discussion groups is planned, as well as informing the VIKO community about the implementation of coalition agreements, ongoing discussions and decisions, and organising discussions. • It is planned to initiate a discussion on CoARA topics in the European University Alliance HEROES. • It is planned to digitise the results of R&D and artistic activities in the VIKO public repository of R&D and artistic activity results.	2025–2028
7. Inform about the progress made in following the principles and implementing the commitments.	• The research evaluation action plan is published on Zendo and the VIKO website. • Active participation in CoARA activities is planned.	2025–2028

R&D and artistic activities are increasingly recognised as essential factors in the well-being of society, and therefore the importance of research evaluation and the organisation's focus on the quality, transparency, comparability and competitiveness of R&D and artistic results is growing.