# OGS CoARA Action Plan

## 1.  Introduction to the OGS CoARA Action Plan

The Italian National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics - OGS is committed to perform responsible, transparent and inclusive research assessment practices by recognising the value of diverse scientific results and multidisciplinary contributions. At the heart of its evaluation processes, OGS combines expert assessment with the careful use of quantitative indicators and places peer review.

This commitment is in line with the Council Conclusions on Research Assessment and the Implementation of Open Science adopted by the Council of the European Union on 10 June 2022. These Council conclusions encourage the European Commission and Member States to adopt open science practices and reform current evaluation systems. Traditional approaches often limit bibliodiversity, multilingualism interdisciplinarity and do not adequately recognise the full spectrum of research activities. Therefore, the  Council calls for a shift to more qualitative, inclusive and diverse assessment systems.

In line with these recommendations, OGS has supported several international initiatives and declarations, including the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). It has also initiated an internal reform process that builds on existing efforts to improve recruitment and evaluation procedures.

A significant milestone in this process was the adoption of the OGS guidelines for the recruitment and career development of researchers and technologists (professional levels I–III) in line with the OTM-R strategy (Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers). These guidelines define principles for temporary and permanent recruitment and career development in line with The European Charter for Researchers.

Moreover, OGS actively promotes open science through institutional policies, specialised tools and public engagement initiatives to foster transparency, accessibility and collaboration with society. The review system is designed to be adaptive, participatory and continuously improved through dialogue with the research community. These efforts were positively evaluated in the process that led OGS to gain the HR Excellence in Research Award (HRS4R). In particular, the principles underpinning the OGS plan are fully aligned with the core commitments of the CoARA Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA):

- recognition and valorisation of research: the plan emphasises the value of a broad range of research activities, processes, and outputs that reflect the Institute's overall mission.
- Peer review: the plan places peer review at the centre of research assessment.

This Action Plan outlines the steps that OGS will undertake through 2029, with a short-term touch point in 2027, to implement the CoARA ARRA commitments. The Action Plan reflects the Institute's **commitment to reforming research assessment, enabling mutual learning and working with national and** international partners to promote high-quality, impactful and responsible research.

## 2.  OGS strategy to implement the ARRA

On 5 March 2024, OGS officially signed the ARRA and joined the CoARA.
To support the implementation of this reform, the OGS President established the OGS-CoARA Working Group (WG) composed of representatives from all key areas of the institute - administration, infrastructure and research. The group was formed as part of an open call in which all employees were asked to volunteer and actively participate.

The working group meets regularly to monitor progress and steer internal activities. At the same time, it plays an active role in the Italian CoARA National Chapter and participates in international CoARA thematic working groups to promote mutual learning and the exchange of best practices.

Specifically, the working group:
- Coordinates training initiatives to develop the skills needed to support the reform process
- Facilitates knowledge sharing, promote mutual learning within the CoARA community and beyond, and ensure transparent communication on the ongoing reform.

In addition, OGS actively contributes to the broader research community by engaging in national and international dialogue. The Institute endeavours to align evaluation criteria and indicators with those adopted by national and international research agencies, evaluation bodies, and scientific networks while contributing its expertise and perspective to strategic decision-making forums.

## 3. OGS implementation of the 10 CoARA ARRA commitments

OGS is determined to implement the commitments of the CoARA ARRA. The following is an account of how the Institute aligns its policies and practices with each of the commitments.

**1. Recognize the diversity of contributions to and careers in research by the needs and nature of the research**

OGS values the broad range of roles and expertise of its scientific, technical and administrative staff, beyond scientific publications. This commitment is reflected in the recently introduced OTM-R aligned recruitment and career progression guidelines, which explicitly recognise the diverse contributions to research.

**2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation, for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators**

This principle aligns with the DORA Declaration and the Council Conclusions on Research Assessment and Open Science that OGS subscribed to (June 2022). OGS promotes a responsible use of quantitative indicators and the qualitative evaluation of all contributions through a peer review system as reported in the OTM-R.

**3. Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in particular, inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index**

OGS supports eliminating the inappropriate use of journal- and publication-based metrics, including JIF and h-index, in the evaluation of researchers.

**4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organizations in research assessment**

OGS does not use rankings of research organizations in its assessment of research.

**5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to**

To support the reform, OGS utilises the expertise of its staff, who are involved in national and international COARA working groups and projects on responsible research assessment.

**6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes**

OGS will ensure the participation of all internal scientific, technical, and administrative staff in the assessment reform process. Researchers and evaluators will actively participate in the review of criteria and procedures, contributing to a shared and transparent approach. All activities will be documented and continuously monitored by the dedicated working group. Systematic feedback will be gathered to support the ongoing revision and improvement of assessment tools and processes.

**7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use**

OGS will improve training opportunities for internal personnel. Specific instructions will be provided to the committees, with particular attention to policies that ensure gender equality, inclusivity, and the promotion of open science practices. Incentives for committee members are already in place and will continue to be considered as part of this process.

**8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition.**

OGS participates in the CoARA General Assembly and the Italian CoARA National Chapter. Through this involvement, the Institute contributes to the development of harmonised approaches and the adoption of innovative research evaluation practices.

**9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the principles and implementation of the commitments**

OGS will ensure transparent and regular communication on the reform of research assessment through internal and external channels, including public events and seminars aimed at informing on the implementation progress.

**10. Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research**

Monitoring of evaluation guidelines is an asset that will be revised to reflect CoARA best practice and institutional experience.

Both evaluation committees and candidates are expected to participate in the review of assessment criteria and tools actively. This input will help to refine evaluation practices in line with new evidence and research.

## 4. Strategic Actions for the CoARA ARRA Implementation

The following actions are expected to be achieved in the short term (ST=2 years) and medium term (MT=5 years) from the publication of this Action Plan.

### Action 1 (ST) - Establishment of an internal Working Group and monitoring of the implementation of the CoARA Action Plan.
An internal working group will be established to oversee and monitor the implementation of the CoARA action plan. The group will ensure that the different profiles within OGS (scientific, technical, etc.), all of which are central to the research process, are duly considered and included in the research assessment reform. This task will be carried out in a structured, documented and transparent manner.

### Action 2 (ST) - Collaborations at national, supranational and international levels.
OGS will promote cooperation and the exchange of experience in the field of research assessment at national and international levels, in particular through the CoARA initiative. The aim is to share progress and promote institutional change in the field of research evaluation by joining forces with other research organisations and universities.

### Action 3 (ST and MT) - Training, outreach and promotion.
OGS will organise training sessions for personnel on the objectives, principles and practices of assessment reform. Regular meetings will be held with researchers, technical staff and administrators at critical stages of the transformation process. Feedback will be actively solicited to encourage broad community engagement. Progress on the reform will be communicated transparently, clearly highlighting milestones and actions undertaken.

**Action 4 (MT) - Support the adoption of best practice, particularly open science.**
OGS will encourage and reward significant contributions to disseminating best practice, with particular support for Open Science. Actions include:
- using self-assessment tools to evaluate current open science practices;
- address identified gaps, particularly in FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable/Reproducible) data management and open access publishing.

**Action 5 (MT) - Review the criteria for the assessment of research in career evaluation procedures: identify possible systems for reviewing the quality of procedures.**
OGS will review the criteria for career assessment. Activities include
- defining systems to ensure quality and fairness in evaluation procedures;
- analysing staff distribution data to ensure inclusion and plan targeted actions;
- identifying institutional gaps in terms of transparency and define response actions;
- identifying and addressing institutional gaps in terms of training on evaluation criteria and tools;
- defining and testing key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor reform implementation.

**Action 6 – (MT) - Development of tools and processes embracing the reformed assessment**
OGS will review the existing tools and metrics and explore the development of a dashboard or similar tools aligned with the reformed evaluation principles. These will support the valorisation of research products, processes, activities and competencies.

**Action 7 (BT) - Strengthening mentoring for early career researchers**
OGS will develop targeted initiatives aimed at supporting and rewarding effective mentoring practices for early career researchers. These initiatives will involve establishing or integrating comprehensive institutional mentoring guidelines and promoting innovative activities designed to enhance motivation, engagement, and participation in mentoring programs.

## 5. Conclusion

Through this action plan, OGS reaffirms its commitment to transforming research assessment in line with the CoARA principles. The proposed actions aim to foster a research environment based on quality, openness and inclusivity. This strategic, participatory, forward-looking roadmap reflects the institute's commitment to meaningful and sustainable change.

# OGS Action Plan Timeline (2024–2029)

| Action | Deadline | Tasks/Focus Areas | CoARA Commitments | Responsibility | Risk and Mitigation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1- Establish internal Working Group CoARA implementation** | 2026 | Create internal working group<br>Ensure inclusion of all OGS profiles<br>Ensure structured, documented and transparent implementation of the CoARA commitments and adherence to the principles. | All | OGS President<br>OGS GD<br>OGS-COARA WG | R: Limited internal engagement.<br>M: Ensure inclusive participation |
| **2 - Foster collaborations at national and international levels** | 2026 | Promote cooperation and experience exchange<br>Actively participate in CoARA<br>Share progress, promote institutional change | 1,5,6,7,8,9,10 | OGS President<br>OGS GD<br>OGS-COARA WG | R: Low networking and internal participation.<br>M: Leverage strategic networks- involve key stakeholders. |
| **3 - Organise training, outreach and promotion activities** | Yearly | Conduct training sessions<br>Collect and integrate feedback from the OGS staff<br>Communicate progress and milestones | 1,5,6,7 | OGS-COARA WG<br>OGS President | R: Resistance to change; low participation; lack of prioritization.<br>M: Foster dialogue and encourage feedback |
| **4 - Support best practices adoption, with focus on Open Science** | 2029 | Encourage Open Science contributions<br>Use self-assessment tools<br>Address gaps (e.g., FAIR data, open access) | 1,2,3,4,6 | OGS President<br>OGS GD<br>OGS-COARA WG<br>OGS-FAIRdata WG (TBD | R: Lack of Open Science skills; limited infrastructure and resources.<br>M: Provide training on Open Science principles and allocate resources and infrastructure. |
| **5 - Review research assessment criteria in career evaluation** | 2029 | Define fair and quality systems<br>Analyze staff data for inclusion<br>Identify and address transparency/training gaps<br>Develop and apply monitoring criteria to track implementation | 5,7,8,9,10 | OGS President<br>OGS DRU<br>OGS-COARA WG<br>OGS/ COARA WG2 (TBD | R: Misalignment with current OGS policies; insufficient resources for reform.<br>M: Adopt a step-by-step implementation strategy |
| **6 - Development of tools and processes embracing the reformed assessment** | 2029 | Review existing tools/metrics<br>Explore dashboard development<br>Support valorization of research products and skills | 1,5,6 | OGS President<br>OGS DRU<br>OGS-COARA WG | R: Technical challenges; not available resources (human and economic)<br>M: Pilot tools before implementation – step by step approach. |
| **7 - Strengthen mentoring for early career researchers** | 2029 | Develop support/reward initiatives<br>Establish or enhance mentoring guidelines<br>Promote innovative mentoring activities | 1,5,7 | OGS researchers and technologists<br>OGS President OGS Administration<br>OGS-COARA WG | R: Inadequate recognition of mentoring.<br>M: Establish clear guidelines and incentives |