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MEMORANDUM

Re.   University of Copenhagen Protocol for Research
            Assessment 2022-24

**Administrative
office in charge** Research & Innovation

Introduction

In 2022-24 the University of Copenhagen performs its second comprehensive research assessment, pertaining to all departments and large centers at the university. Universities all over Europe carry out assessments of their research, initiated by varying stakeholders and with differences in possible consequences. The Danish approach has traditionally been decentralized, with the individual universities autonomously initiating their own research assessments. The UCPH Rectorate has decided to initiate consecutive research assessments in a (maximum) six-year cycle, to monitor the state of research excellence through international peer assessments, which inherently contain comparative perspectives.

Based upon a positive first assessment round in 2016-18, the university Management Team (the Rectorate and Deans) decided to repeat the previously developed concept for research assessment at the UCPH, with minor updates and modifications in light of teachings from cycle one. The second research assessment takes place in 2022-24, with 2024 reserved for management processing at faculty and university level. Rector's summary of the 2016-18 assessment is available at ku.dk[1].

The primary purpose of the research assessment is internal learning and development. Hence, the overarching objectives for the present exercise is to focus on the status of research quality and on the potential to improve it. The assessment should provide the departments and faculties with a tool to maintain and improve the high level of research quality across the entire

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[1] https://research.ku.dk/excellence/evalueringer/

university in a systematic way. Secondarily, the UCPH is an actor in ongoing political debates and reforms on quality, independence and public financing of research that influence the university's conditions. In such matters the monitoring and quality control of the research production is an important tool.

Within a common UCPH framework, the six faculties and 38 departments and large department-like centers have the responsibility to carry out self-assessments. All departments and research centers with direct reference to the Dean[2] must engage an external peer review panel.
The heads of department/center leaders have the responsibility for follow-up in the individual departments.

The Dean of the faculty has the overall responsibility for the assessment process and for securing the assessment's intended learning objective.

Consecutively, the assessment allows the Rectorate to get a broad peer-based overview of the quality of research as well as the direction of the university's aggregated research efforts.

The present protocol[3] describes the concept for assessment, and provides faculties with an overall conceptual framework for the assessment process that can be adjusted locally to place special emphasis on aspects of particular interest.

Protocol
The research assessment at UCPH is a tool that:
1. documents past performance: bears witness to the quality of the research produced in individual departments through assessments based on internationally recognized academic standards.
2. guides the development of the current state of the art: To reflect on strengths and weaknesses in order to promote excellence in individual departments.[4]
3. informs strategy: To establish a tool to help enhance research quality at UCPH based on a systematic assessment of each department's research strategy and performance.

The subject of assessment is the quality of the department's overall research production, including the strategy and initiatives launched by the

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[2] In the event that specific sizable centers are already undergoing equivalent individual evaluations or assessments, their most recent results can be condensed in an executive summary and included in the faculty report.
[3] This protocol is an updated version of the previous UCPH research assessment protocol, which was developed based on previous experiences with research assessment in the six faculties at UCPH, assessments conducted in other European Universities and relevant literature on research assessment.
[4] At faculties which do not have departments, an organization reflecting the line of management is used.

department to promote excellent research. It is not the individual researchers' performance. The overarching purpose of the research assessment is to systematically promote learning and research excellence throughout the width of each department's disciplinary scope.

Organization and resources

The assessment process is organized in accordance with the line management at UCPH, with heads of department referring to the Deans, who refer to the Prorector for Research and Rector.

Departmental management is expected to take the opportunity to engage faculty members in a critical discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the research produced. The individual assessments include a panel site visit and result in a report based on a standard UCPH template.

In the departments, besides the time invested by the research staff, administrative assistance will be required to coordinate the assessment process and assist the review panel. Some faculties may find it appropriate to assign this task to the faculty secretariat. In others it would make more sense for the department secretariat to undertake it locally.

The process will involve expenses in the form of staff hours in preparing documentation and planning the panel's visit, as well as expenditure on the review panel's activities, to be borne by departments. For guidelines on compensation of panel members and chair consult appendix F.

An assessment process (self-assessment and the review panel) is expected to take approximately a year of varying intensity from starting the assessment process until the work is completed.

Steps in the assessment process

1) It is recommended that the HoD prepares a timetable for the assessment process, an inventory of the resources available for assessment and appoints one or two coordinators from the department's scientific staff. The coordinators will serve as ambassadors for the assessment process and ensure the necessary dialogue on employee involvement in the assessment and follow-up process. The HoD can include coordinators in selecting methods for self-assessment, such as seminars, dialogue meetings or focus groups.
2) The Head of Department (HoD) proposes a comprehensive list of possible panel participants to the Dean, matching the criteria listed in the protocol. Use template, appendix G. The Faculty may add relevant remarks to the proposed candidates before submitting to the central office for Research and Innovation.
3) The Rectorate receives and approves the comprehensive list.

4) The departments recruit the desired no. of external peer review panelists to perform assessments of each department. Should the necessary recruitment fail, additional panelists can be approved ad hoc.
5) The departments receive bibliometric data presentations from the faculty, and perform self-assessments in set templates (appendix A). KUB supplies the core data to the faculties.
6) The departments submit the review materials to the panel in due time prior to the site visit (minimum four weeks recommended).
7) After the site visit, the HoD receives a draft of the panel's report for review and comment on possible errors or misunderstandings.
8) The HoD adds a preface to the department report that highlights his/her plan for follow-up.
9) The HoD submits the report to the Dean.
10) The HoD discusses the panel's report and the department's plan to follow-up on the recommendations with the Faculty Management Team. The discussion should result in a departmental follow-up action plan.
11) The Faculty comprises a joint overview/assessment in a faculty report.
12) The Dean submits the faculty report to the Rector. The deadline is 22 March 2024.
13) The Dean and Rector meet to discuss the report. During these discussions, core challenges and recommendations and a summary of the departments' plans for follow-up will be shared.
14) UCPH will publish a summary of the main findings of the entire assessment at university level by the end of the three year process. Individual reports at the department and faculty level are subject to public access upon request.

Suggested follow-up actions
1) The HoD is advised to construct a follow-up process on the conclusions and recommendations from their panel visit and research assessment reports, which engages the department's academic staff and includes a joint information on the outcomes at a department meeting.
2) Departments may include follow-up discussions of conclusions and recommendations from the research assessment reports as part of their regular annual academic planning and evaluation cycles.
3) Departments may incorporate conclusions and recommendations from their research assessment reports in the process of evaluating and revising the departments' goals and action plans.
4) Conclusions and recommendations from the departments' research assessment reports may be used as a reference point in annual strategic discussions between the HoD and the Dean.

5) Conclusions and recommendations from the faculties' research assessment reports may be used as a reference point in annual strategic discussions between the faculty dean and Rector
6) UCPH Central Administration devises a centralized follow-up process.
7) UCPH Central Administration devises a process for reviewing the lessons learnt from the research assessment across the university.

Requirements to the composition of the review panel

The review panel must be composed of internationally recognized researchers covering insofar as possible the disciplinary breadth of the department's research. It is particularly important for the chair of the panel to have a broad academic profile and to be able to mediate professionally between all members of the panel. The number of panel members will vary with the size and composition of the department and should be as small as possible but contain no fewer than three members. It is stressed that the panelists must have a high level of professionalism, a comparable level of ambition for research excellence and come from institutions that belong in an international league at least comparable to the relevant department.

The HoD is responsible for bringing together a suitable panel with high level of academic esteem and the best possible balance in terms of gender, age and institutional diversity. If at all possible each panel must include at least one panel member who 1) is a repeat from the previous UCPH research assessment; 2) is familiar with Danish/Nordic University relations; 3) has management experience.

Additionally, the HoD must ensure that the panel is impartial. The general principles of disqualification account, following article 3 of the Public Administration Act (Forvaltningsloven, LBK nr 433 af 22/04/2014). The Danish binding guidelines on disqualification in respect of the practice of the funding function by the Danish Councils for Independent Research and the Danish Council for Strategic Research dated 15 June 2007 can be consulted for guidelines specifically directed towards scientific reviewers (available here in English).

In ensuring the panel's legitimacy, the HoD must propose a comprehensive list of potential panelists to the Rectorate's approval.

Site visit and outcome

The review panel will visit the department and meet the management, faculty, postdocs and PhDs. If the panel finds it relevant, meetings with administrative staff, students and external stakeholders could also be set up. Such visits have two purposes: First, they give the panel and the department the chance to engage in dialogue to inspire and promote reflection for the purpose of development. Secondly, panel members get the opportunity to

validate and complement the content of the self-assessment, and test their preliminary views gained from considering the self-assessment and additional documentation. The duration of site visits will vary depending on the size of the department.

The review panel prepares a draft of the assessment report using the Template for panel assessment report (appendix C), which addresses the same categories as the department's self assessment. NB: the panel draft version must be submitted to the HoD using a text format that allows for revisions, e.g. Word. The HoD is to be given the opportunity to comment on a draft of the report before it is returned to the chair of the panel for completion. The review panel's analysis results in a report assessing the quality of research and the panel's recommendations for further improvement.

Scope of the research assessment
The assessed research production is to include the total production of research throughout the past app. six years in the department or the possible time frame since the period included in the last research assessment and following the availability of resent data material. Additional appendices and self-assessment will focus on faculty and non-faculty (PhDs and postdocs) scientific staff.

Assessment categories
The template for the self-assessment report will help the department to identify relevant areas for assessment. There are four categories. Each category should be discussed based on the department's strategy, e.g. using a SWOT-analysis covering strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. To provide inspiration, sub-questions in each category are suggested in the template.

The four assessment categories are:

1. Quality and international impact of the research (including interdisciplinary research)
2. Alignment between research and educational activities
3. Private and public collaborations, innovation and societal impact
4. Governance and organization (including resources and capacity)

The review panel gets a template that mirrors to the one used for the self-assessment report, thus ensuring that the department receives assessments and recommendations on the issues addressed in the self-assessment.

Materials that inform the panel's assessment

- The department's strategy (if any) and self-assessment
- Facts and figures about the department
- The department's research assessment from the 2016-18 cycle
- Short CVs (excl. publication lists) for a broad representation of faculty
- A bibliometric analysis based on data from CURIS carried out by UCPH University Library. The department's bibliometric analysis includes all publications registered in CURIS from 2017, unless specific local conditions dictate another starting year, and onwards (2020/21)
- A small selection of publications to exemplify the department's research
- A visit to the department, with the panel meeting management and researchers
- The faculty's latest strategy and the UCPH Strategy 2023
- General information about the UCPH's structure and governance.

Assessment format and guidelines
Each review panel's assessment must include a scoring of the department's overall current standing using the following scale of modulation:

- Quality that is world-leading in originality, significance and rigour.
- Quality that is internationally excellent in originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence.
- Quality that is recognised internationally in originality, significance and rigour.
- Quality that is recognised nationally in originality, significance and rigour.
- Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognized work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

The reasoning for a specific score must be carefully argued in the report's prose, alongside when possible an indication of the department's current international standing with reference to different fields of research, as well as specific suggestions for possible ways to improve research quality.

Report overview
All written materials in the assessment must be in English.

The department report consists of:
  a) Background data (information about staff, finance and bibliometrics as well as the department strategy, if any);
  b) The department's self-assessment;
  c) The review panel's report, containing the panel's assessment of the current quality of research and recommendations for improving research in the department within the existing budgetary framework.
  d) The 5 page executive summary prepared by the HoD, contains:

a. Main conclusion: The current level of excellence of the research produced in the department including an optional performance rating (½ p)
b. Three significant factors that have enhanced the quality of research (e.g. international recruitment, external funding etc.,) (½ p)
c. Three critical strong suits of the department (½ p)
d. Three critical weaknesses of the department (½ p)
e. Other issues to be emphasized (½ p)
f. Conclusion and plan for action: (2½ p)

*This report will be used in the dialogue between the HoD and the Dean, and in the ongoing dialogue at the department.*

The faculty report consists of the review panel's report from each department, as well as the HoD's executive summary; a faculty summary prepared by the Dean using the same headlines as the HoD. The Dean will then highlight the main points of the joint faculty report prior to dialogue with Rector and the Management Team.

This report is used in the dialogue between the Dean and Rector and in the further dialogue at the faculty and in the Management Team (LT).

The university report consists of the six faculty summaries and the Rector's main observations and action points for the future. *This report is used in the dialogue between the Rector and the University Board and other stakeholders.*

This report format is intended to facilitate a development-oriented dialogue once the assessment has been completed.
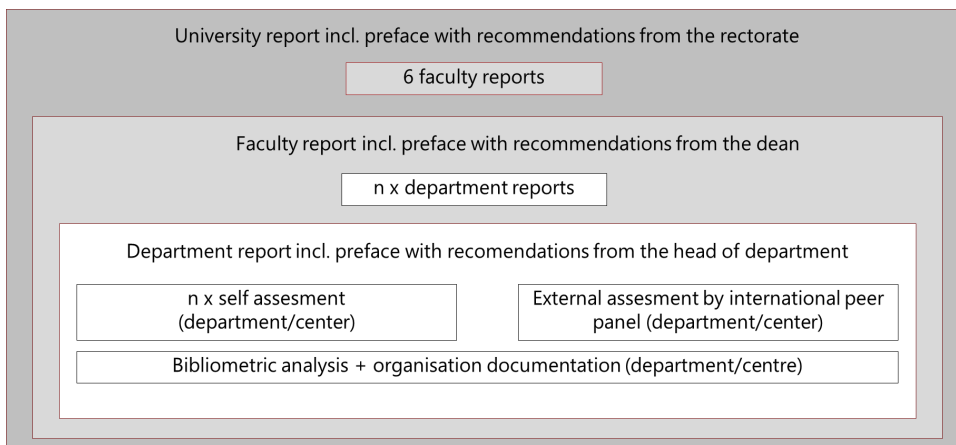
Appendices:
A: Template for self-assessment report [under review]

B: Template for the departments - Facts & Figures [under review]
C: Template for panel assessment report [under review]
D: Requirements specification for bibliometric analysis [under review]
E: [Missing]
F: Recommendations for compensation of panel members and chair [under development]
G: Template for approval of panelist [under development]