KØBENHAVNS UNIVERSITET

University of Copenhagen Protocol for Research Assessment 2022-24

M E M O R A N D U M

Regarding   University of Copenhagen Protocol for Research
Assessment 2022-24

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Introduction

In 2022-24 the University of Copenhagen will be conducting its second comprehensive research assessment, involving all departments and large centres 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 decentralised, with the individual universities autonomously initiating their own research assessments. The Rectorate has decided to initiate consecutive research assessments in a (maximum) six-year cycle to monitor the state of the overall research quality and excellence through international peer assessments, which inherently contain comparative perspectives.

Based upon a positive first assessment round in 2016-18, Senior Management (the Rectorate and the deans) decided to reuse the previously developed concept for research assessment at UCPH, with some updates and modifications drawing on teaching from cycle one. The second research assessment is scheduled for 2022-24, with 2024 reserved for management processing at faculty and university level. The 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 objective 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://forskning.ku.dk/integritet/evalueringer/UCPH_research_assesment_-_Rectors_summary.pdf

university in a systematic way. Secondarily, 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, and others to come, the monitoring and quality control of the research production is an important tool.

Within a common UCPH framework, the six faculties and 38 departments as well as large department-like centres will carry out self-assessments. All departments[2] and research centres with direct reference to the Dean[3] must engage an external peer review panel.

The heads of department/centre leaders are responsible for following up in the individual departments.

The Dean has the overall responsibility for the assessment process and for securing the intended learning objective (of the assessment). Subsequently 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.

This protocol[4] describes the assessment concept and provides the faculties with a conceptual framework for the assessment process that can be adjusted locally to put 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 recognised academic standards.
2. Guides the development of the current state of the art: reflects on strengths and weaknesses to promote excellence in individual departments.
3. Informs strategy: establishes a means to help enhance research quality at UCPH based on a systematic assessment of each department's goals and action plan, research strategic documents and performance.

The subject of assessment is the quality of the department's overall research production, including the goals and action plans and initiatives launched by the department to promote excellent research. It is not the individual

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[2] At faculties that do not have departments, an organisation reflecting the line of management is used.

[3] In the event that specific sizable centres 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.

[4] This protocol is an updated version of the previous UCPH research assessment protocol, which was developed based on experiences with research assessment in the six faculties at UCPH, assessments conducted in other European Universities and relevant literature on research assessment.

researchers' performance. The overarching purpose of the research assessment is to systematically promote learning, secure the overall research quality and promote excellence throughout each department's disciplinary scope. Hence, the documentation that serves as a basis for the departments' self-assessments and the panel assessments is intended as a foundation on which to base the output: development-oriented dialogue, recommendations and further initiatives at department, faculty and university levels, spurred by the assessment process and results.

Organisation and resources
The assessment process is organised in accordance with the line management at UCPH.

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.

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

The process will involve expenses in the form of staff hours to prepare documentation and plan the panel's visit and expenses for the review panel's activities, to be borne by departments.

An assessment process (self-assessment and review panel) is expected to take approximately a year of varying intensity from start to completion.

Steps in the assessment process
1) It is recommended that the Head of Department (HoD) prepares a timetable for the assessment process, an inventory of the resources available for assessment and appoints one or two coordinators from among the department's academic 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 processes. The HoD can include the coordinators in the selection of self-assessment methods, such as seminars, dialogue meetings or focus groups.
2) The HoD submits a comprehensive list of suggested panellist candidates to the Dean, matching the criteria listed in the protocol. Use the template in appendix E. The faculty may add relevant remarks to the candidates before submitting to UCPH Research and Innovation.
3) The Rectorate receives and approves the comprehensive list.
4) The departments recruit the desired no. of external peer review panellists to perform assessments of each department. Should the

necessary recruitment fail, additional panellists can be approved ad hoc.

5) The departments receive bibliometric data presentations from the faculty and perform self-assessments in set templates (appendix A + B). The University Library (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) Site visit from international panel of peers.

8) After the site visit, the HoD receives a draft of the panel's report for review and comments on any errors or misunderstandings.

9) The HoD adds a preface to the department report that highlights their follow-up plans.

10) The HoD submits the report to the Dean.

11) The HoD discusses the panel report and the department's plan to follow up on the recommendations with Faculty Management. The discussion should result in a departmental follow-up action plan.

12) The faculty prepares joint overview/assessment in the faculty report.

13) The Dean submits the faculty report to the Rector no later than 22 March 2024.

14) The Dean and the Rector meet to discuss the report core challenges and recommendations as well as a summary of the departments' follow-up plans.

15) UCPH publishes 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 levels are subject to public access upon request.

Suggested follow-up actions

1) The HoD is advised to devise a follow-up process on the conclusions and recommendations from the panel visit and research assessment reports, which engages the department's academic staff and includes 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 Dean and Rector

6) The Central Administration devises a centralised follow-up process.

7) The Central Administration devises a process for reviewing the lessons learnt from the research assessment across the university.

Requirements for the composition of the review panel
The review panel must be composed of internationally recognised researchers covering insofar as possible the disciplinary breadth of the department's research. Moreover, in research fields that have Danish as their dominant language, departments may take this under consideration and choose to include a panel member from a Danish research institution. 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 panellists 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 a 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. Furthermore, panellists from universities that are partners to UCPH in international university alliances, such as the LERU universities, the University of Edinburgh and the 4EU+ universities etc. are welcome.

Additionally, the HoD must ensure that the panel is impartial. The general principles of disqualification apply, see 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).

To ensure the panel's legitimacy, the HoD must submit a comprehensive list of potential panellists for the Rectorate's approval. A template for this purpose will be circulated in January 2022.

Site visit and outcome
The review panel will visit the department and meet management, faculty as well as postdocs and PhDs. It is recommended that the review panel be introduced to a limited and select group of staff, including some of the department's senior researchers. If the panel finds it relevant, meetings with administrative staff, students and external stakeholders could also be set up. Where relevant, central pieces of research infrastructure may also be presented to the panel as part of the site visit.

Site 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. Second, 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. It is recommended that the site visit is concluded with a final meeting between the panel and department management, giving the panel the opportunity to verbally present its overall impression and conclusions.

The review panel prepares a draft of the assessment report using the template for panel assessment report (appendix B), which addresses the same categories as the department's self-assessment. 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 purpose is to correct any misunderstandings or unclarities. The panel draft version must be submitted to the HoD using a text format that allows for revisions, e.g. Word. The review panel's analysis is set out in a report assessing the quality of research and, most important, the panel's recommendations for further development-oriented initiatives in the department.

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

Assessment categories
The UCPH research assessment contains four categories. As indicated by the name, the assessment has research as its overriding and primary subject of interest. Hence, of the four assessment categories, the first one, 'Quality and international impact of the research', is the most important and substantial category. This is mirrored in the templates for the departments' self-assessments and the panel assessments, which give particular focus to category 1 in their focus and allotted space. The three subsequent categories are placed in a nonspecific order of relevance. The template for the self-assessment report will help the department to identify relevant sub-topics for assessment. Each category should be discussed based on the department's goals and action plan and research strategic documents, 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 organisation (including resources and capacity)

The review panel's template mirrors 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 goals and action plans, research strategic documents 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 the University Library. The department's bibliometric analysis includes all publications registered in CURIS from 2017 and onwards (2020/21), unless specific local conditions dictate another starting year
- A small selection of publications to exemplify the department's research
- A visit to the department, with the panel meeting management and researchers
- If available in English, the faculty's (or, if available, the department's) latest goals and action plan (målplan).
- The faculty's latest goals and action plan, research strategic documents and the UCPH Strategy 2023
- General information about UCPH's structure and governance
- The Rector's summary of the 2016-18 assessment.

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 for research quality:

- 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 recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

The primary focus of the final assessment should be the overall quality of research, drawing upon relevant conclusions and recommendations pertaining to each of the four assessment categories. 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. The panel should clearly state, if significant variation in the research quality within the single department is present, and this reflects in their overall assessment.

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's goals and action plan (målplan) and other research strategic documents in Danish if not available in English);
  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 five-page executive summary prepared by the HoD contains:
      1. Main conclusion: The current level of excellence of the research produced in the department including a performance rating (½ p)
      2. Three significant factors that have enhanced the quality of research (e.g. international recruitment, external funding etc.,) (½ p)
      3. Three critical strong suits of the department and immediate opportunities (½ p)
      4. Three critical weaknesses of the department and immediate threats (½ p)
      5. Other issues to be emphasised (½ p)
   6. Conclusion and plan for action: (2½ p)

The 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, the HoD's executive summary and 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 the dialogue with the Rector and Senior Management.

The report will be used in the dialogue between the Dean and the Rector and in the further dialogue at the faculty and in Senior Management (LT).

The university report consists of the six faculty summaries and the Rector's main observations and action points for the future. *The report will be 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.
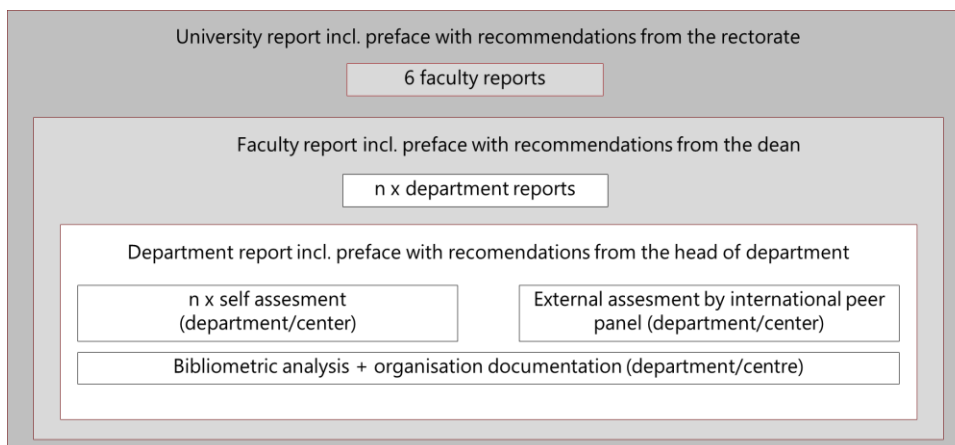
Appendices:
A: Template for self-assessment report
B: Template for panel assessment report
C: Template for departments - facts & figures
D: Bibliometric analysis
E: Template for approval of panellists