

From interdependent movements to shared action: Connecting publishing and assessment reforms

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Foreword

01

Research assessment and scholarly publishing are intimately connected. In simple terms, assessment strongly influences what is valued and rewarded, while publishing and scholarly communication strongly influence what is made visible and accessible. In practice, these relationships are reciprocal: assessment shapes publishing behavior, while publishing infrastructures and practices shape what can be recognized and assessed.

For too long, reform efforts in these two domains have operated largely as parallel movements. However, our four organizations – ASAPbio, CWTS, DORA, and the International Science Council (ISC) – jointly believe that the success of the research system relies on these initiatives strengthening their collaboration and coordinating their agendas. Meaningful progress in either domain is unlikely to produce the systemic change needed unless the two movements become more closely aligned and mutually reinforcing.

The current research system is reaching a breaking point. Transformative change is frequently stalled by deep-seated structural barriers which require collective action. We call on the global research community to approach these reforms as interconnected dimensions of a single system.

This paper outlines our call for a strategic shift to coordinated implementation. As co-hosts of a workshop in Pisa in November 2025, we have identified three shared priorities for immediate action: "Trust Indicators," "Beyond the Article," and a "Global Assessment Glossary". They were selected because each addresses an area where changes in research assessment and scholarly publishing must advance together, while offering practical, high-impact opportunities for coordinated action. Others have been identified, and we hope that more will be added in the future. This paper, co-authored with participants in the Pisa workshop, also serves as the context in which we will build our own initiatives, including the forthcoming DORA Practical Guide for Scholarly Communication and the ISC Forum on Publishing and Research Assessment, ensuring that our

collective efforts realign assessment and publishing with the vision of science as a global public good. We hope it can inspire you as well.

Together, we can move from fragmented initiatives to a coordinated system that rewards quality, integrity, scientific impact, and societal impact for the sake of human and planetary flourishing.

Signed,

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**International
Science Council**



Executive summary: One system, two reform movements

02

Research assessment and scholarly publishing play interconnected roles in shaping research culture, incentives, and norms that ultimately determine what knowledge is produced, communicated, trusted, and rewarded. These two interdependent components of the research system are undergoing change, fueled by initiatives that share core principles, goals, and challenges, but act largely in parallel. Coordinated action in assessment and publishing reform holds the opportunity for more effective, fairer, and more durable change.

The problems in research assessment and scholarly publishing are well documented, from overreliance on journal prestige and the dominance of selective bibliographic databases to the underrecognition of peer review and the limited visibility of research outputs beyond journal articles. Various reform initiatives have emerged to deal with these problems, both in the research assessment domain and in the scholarly publishing domain. However, these problems cannot be effectively addressed by a reform in either of these domains alone. Reform needs to be coordinated across domains. Fragmented reform efforts may not only duplicate work, but may also send inconsistent signals to researchers and institutions, which may undermine the adoption of more responsible practices.

Stronger coordination creates tangible benefits across the research system. For reform initiatives, it increases collective reach, legitimacy, and influence while reducing duplication of effort and strengthening shared messages. For research performing and funding organizations, and policymakers, it provides a more

coherent foundation for policy development and implementation, enabling organizations to draw on shared experience while adapting approaches to their own missions and contexts. For researchers, coordination helps ensure that emerging practices in scholarly publishing are recognized and rewarded consistently, reducing uncertainty and creating more pathways for diverse contributions to be valued.

In this paper, we give an overview of how we are considering these issues and propose ways forward for coordinating the reform movements in research assessment and scholarly publishing. Importantly, this coordination is not intended to replace existing initiatives or create new layers of governance. Rather, it is a light-touch and inclusive effort to coordinate agendas, amplify existing work, and promote shared learning.

Problems in research assessment and scholarly publishing

03

Research assessment and scholarly publishing (Box 1) are intimately connected. Although there are differences between disciplines, countries, and regions, research assessment often relies heavily on peer-reviewed journal articles and metrics based on such publications ([Lim et al., 2025](#)). Conversely, publishing practices of researchers are often shaped to a considerable degree by the assessment practices researchers are facing ([Rowlands & Wright, 2021](#); [Aubert Bonn & Pinxten, 2021](#); [Johan et al., 2024](#)).

In two recently published survey reports ([Chiarelli et al., 2024](#); [Cambridge University Press, 2025](#)), researchers and other actors in the research system paint a depressing picture of the current state of both research assessment and scholarly publishing. Figure 1 below summarizes some insights.

Concerns about overreliance of research assessment on journal- and article-based metrics are widespread. These concerns are visible in the Cambridge University Press survey of researchers and other actors in the research system (3,066 respondents). In this survey, almost two-thirds of respondents (64%) indicated that academic reward and recognition systems emphasize quantity of outputs over quality and give only limited recognition to contributions beyond articles in established journals (reproduced in Figure 1, top-left box). More than half of the respondents believed that reward and recognition systems contribute to research integrity issues.

Like research assessment, scholarly publishing faces major problems. For instance, while the benefits of open access are widely recognized, the increased

adoption of open access in different parts of the world has also led to heavily criticized business models. Almost two-thirds of the respondents in the above-mentioned survey indicated that the growth in open access publishing has increased inequalities between authors, favoring well-funded authors over their less privileged colleagues (Figure 1, top-right box). In addition, more than half of the respondents believed that the growth in open access publishing has encouraged publishers to prioritize publication volume and profitability over editorial rigor and quality control, and over 40% of the respondents believed that this has increased fraudulent publishing activity.

Box 1: Research Assessment and Scholarly Publishing



We use the term **research assessment** throughout this paper as an umbrella term encompassing the assessment of researchers, their research activities and diverse contributions, and research performing organizations and their internal units. While these levels of assessment are interconnected, the principles, criteria and indicators appropriate to each are not necessarily interchangeable. In particular, institution- or field-level indicators should not automatically be used as proxies for individual researcher quality.



We use the term **scholarly publishing** to refer to processes through which researchers communicate, disseminate, validate, curate, preserve and archive the outcomes of their research activities. Scholarly publishing, sometimes also referred to as scholarly communication, includes not only the publication of research articles in peer-reviewed journals, but also the publication of other types of outputs, such as preprints, longform content such as monographs and books, translations, interviews, cultural contributions, catalogues, datasets, software, peer review reports, etc.

Reward and Recognition

64%

Reward and recognition systems emphasize quantity of outputs over quality

64%

Reward and recognition systems fail to fully recognize contributions outside articles in established journals

54%

Reward and recognition systems contribute to research integrity issues

Open Access Publishing

65%

Growth in OA publishing has created inequality between authors with and without funding

54%

Growth in OA publishing has encouraged publishers to prioritize publication volume and profitability over editorial rigor and quality control

42%

Growth in OA publishing has increased fraudulent publishing activity

Peer Review

81%

Increase in number of research outputs published has put peer review under pressure

72%

Lack of time to do peer review is a major issue

50%

Poor-quality peer review is a major issue

Speed of Publishing

50%

Speed of journal publication processes is dissatisfactory

72%

Lengthy peer review times are likely to negatively impact career development

57%

Lack of recognition of preprints and other non-traditional outputs is likely to negatively impact career development

Figure 1. Percentage of survey respondents expressing support for 12 statements about research assessment and scholarly publishing practices. Source: Statistics on reward and recognition, open access publishing, and peer review are from *Cambridge University Press (2025)*; statistics on speed of publishing are from *Chiarelli et al. (2024)*.

Peer review might be expected to guarantee the quality of research, but over 80% of the survey respondents considered peer review to be under pressure due to the volume of publications, and over 70% identified lack of time to perform peer review as a major issue (Figure 1, bottom-left box). In addition, half of the respondents considered poor-quality peer review to be a major issue.

In the Chiarelli et al. survey of researchers (9,991 respondents), half of the respondents were dissatisfied with the speed of journal publication processes (reproduced in Figure 1, bottom-right box), and only a quarter (27%; not displayed in Figure 1) of the respondents were satisfied. Almost three-quarters of the respondents indicated that lengthy peer review times are likely to negatively impact their career development. Respondents recognized the value of preprints, with 54% rating them as highly effective in accelerating academic discourse (not displayed in Figure 1). However, over half of the respondents believed that there is a lack of recognition of preprints and other non-traditional research outputs, which is likely to negatively affect their career development.

In addition to the issues raised in the above-mentioned surveys, research assessment and scholarly publishing also suffer from linguistic, geographic and disciplinary biases in dominant bibliographic databases.

These databases are often opaque and strongly oriented toward English-language literature, making many valuable research contributions less visible, particularly research from the Global South, research published in languages other than English, and research addressing locally or regionally relevant questions (Brasil, 2026). Frequently used databases also offer a poor coverage of research contributions beyond conventional journal articles. Coverage of contributions such as preprints, books, edited collections, critical editions, translations, exhibitions, performances, artistic research, datasets, software, peer review reports, protocols, policy reports, and community engagement tends to be limited.

Moreover, in recent years, the rise of sophisticated paper and peer review mills (Oviedo-García, 2024), “artificial intelligence (AI) slop”, and AI-generated fraud threatens to further overwhelm quality control mechanisms in scholarly publishing, putting at risk public trust in the scholarly record. The responsible use of AI in both authorship and peer review, including the need for disclosure policies,

AI-assisted detection tools, and the risk of misinformation and bias is still being scrutinized by diverse actors in the system. In addition, research funders, universities, and other assessment bodies are increasingly exploring the use of AI in evaluation processes, raising important questions about transparency, accountability, bias, confidentiality, and the appropriate role of human judgment in assessment. These developments further illustrate the interaction between research assessment and scholarly publishing: systems that reward publication volume create incentives that increase pressure on scholarly publishing systems, while weaknesses in those systems make it harder for assessment processes to distinguish trustworthy contributions from unreliable ones.

Current reward and recognition systems largely reinforce the status quo in scholarly publishing by relying on conventional approaches that no longer reflect the quality and diversity of the global research system. Greater discoverability and visibility makes a contribution available for consideration, but assessment must still evaluate it according to criteria appropriate to the relevant mission, field and context. Fundamental roles in scholarly communication – including training, mentorship, curation, peer review, and editorship – continue to be underrecognized, while contributions such as reports of failed experiments and null results are often omitted from assessment. Because assessment fails to reward these, they disincentivize researchers from them, and can lead to unsustainable situations, particularly in peer review capacity ([Pinfield et al., 2026](#)).

Most assessment practices continue to reward conventional markers of prestige rather than practices that improve the transparency, reliability, openness, and societal value of research. Even when rules change, evaluators suffer from deeply ingrained “prestige bias”: when confronted with unfamiliar formats like narrative CVs or intense peer review workloads, committees habitually fall back on the “halo effect” of a known journal brand or institutional reputation to infer quality ([RoRI, 2025](#)). This assessment behavior, in turn, actively punishes authors who experiment with innovative formats or outputs that are not made visible. As a result, while researchers may be encouraged by their institutions and funders to adopt open, transparent, and socially engaged approaches, they are still largely rewarded primarily for publication volume, citation counts and venue prestige. This is the fundamental tension that researchers currently face.

Reform initiatives

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Various initiatives have emerged to **address problems in research assessment**, including the problem of overreliance on publication-based metrics. Landmark initiatives include the [Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#), the [Leiden Manifesto](#), the [Metric Tide](#), the [Hong Kong Principles](#), the [Helsinki Initiative on Multilingualism in Scholarly Communication](#), the [Latin American Forum on Research Assessment \(FOLEC\)](#), the [Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment \(CoARA\)](#), the [INORMS Research Evaluation Group](#) (now the [Research Evaluation Global Alliance](#)), the [Global Research Council RRA Working Group](#), and the [Barcelona Declaration](#). These initiatives promote assessment practices that recognize diverse forms of quality and varied research contributions, balance qualitative and quantitative assessment, increase equity, and refrain from

Assessment Reform Initiatives/Actors	Publishing Reform Initiatives/Actors
 Declarations and coalitions (DORA, CoARA, FOLEC, Leiden Manifesto, Metric Tide)	 UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science
 Hong Kong Principles	 Diamond open access
 Helsinki Initiative on Multilingualism	 Preprint servers and advocates
 INORMS (now Research Evaluation Global Alliance)	 Open peer review and publish-review-curate
 Global Research Council RRA Working Group	 Sleuths and research integrity champions
 Barcelona Declaration	 Reproducibility and open science

inappropriate use of indicators such as the journal impact factor and the h-index. Assessment reform initiatives also emphasize the importance of aligning research assessment with the mission and values of the entity being evaluated, thereby recognizing the context-dependent nature of research assessment ([Hicks et al., 2015](#), [SCOPE Framework](#), [de Rijcke et al., 2023](#)).

Various initiatives and movements have also emerged to **address problems in scholarly publishing**, including problems related to access, equity, quality control, research integrity, and the speed of scholarly communication. The UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science ([UNESCO, 2021](#)) and the diamond open access community ([Consortium of the DIAMAS project, 2025](#)) promote more multilingual, more accessible and more equitable approaches to scholarly publishing ([Rooryck & Pölönen 2026](#)). The diamond open access community also emphasizes the importance of scholar-led governance of journals and other publication channels. Proponents of preprinting ([Berg et al., 2016](#); [Polka, 2017](#)) focus on improving the efficiency of scholarly publishing and accelerating the dissemination of scientific knowledge. This community promotes preprinting and open forms of evaluation, for instance through open peer review ([Ford, 2013](#); [Avissar-Whiting et al., 2024](#); [Ross-Hellauer & Horbach, 2024](#)) and the publish-review-curate model ([Currie, 2024](#); [Corker et al., 2024](#); [PRC Alliance](#)). The research integrity community ([Sabel & Larhammar, 2025](#)) prioritizes strengthening the integrity of research, addressing problems such as predatory journals and paper mills. Related to this, the [reproducibility community](#) focuses on enhancing the reproducibility of research, for instance by promoting preregistration and open sharing of data and code.

Toward a coordinated reform ecosystem

05

The above-mentioned reform initiatives in research assessment and scholarly publishing have substantially increased awareness of problems in the research system and have contributed to the development of new principles, commitments, policies, and experimental practices. Many initiatives have now moved beyond awareness raising and are increasingly focused on implementation. However, progress remains uneven across institutions, disciplines, regions, and stakeholder groups.

To achieve transformative rather than incremental change, we argue that these movements must move to a more systematically coordinated next phase.

While initiatives have successfully drawn attention to critical issues, the current landscape is fragmented because the connections between the agendas are not always made clear, and progress is uneven, with researchers often facing situations in which assessment reform and publishing reform remain misaligned.

The costs of fragmentation are becoming increasingly visible, especially as fragmented reform initiatives compete for the time and attention of researchers and policymakers. Insufficient coordination leads to duplication of effort. Combined with the additive nature of some reform efforts, this may create a sense of reform fatigue, where the demand for change is perceived as a burden that outweighs the potential benefits. Importantly, diversity in the research system should be embraced and should not be incorrectly perceived as fragmentation. Different communities, disciplines, regions and organizations appropriately pursue different priorities and approaches. The problem of fragmentation arises when a lack of coordination between reform efforts leads to

incompatible incentives, unnecessary duplication of work, or a failure to recognize dependencies between reforms. Coordination should therefore seek greater coherence without reducing the plurality of reform approaches.

Beyond the visible costs of fragmentation, reform is often stalled by deep-seated systemic hurdles that constrain the ability of individual organizations to take action. Many institutions operate under national or regional regulations that mandate specific assessment metrics, leaving them with little room to reform their way of working. Furthermore, a significant “first-mover disadvantage” persists. Institutions frequently hesitate to adopt more progressive assessment or publishing practices out of fear that their researchers will be penalized when seeking funding or positions at organizations that still adhere to more traditional norms. In particular early-career and internationally mobile researchers may be at risk because they are most likely to move between systems applying different criteria. Because research operates through globally interconnected networks, individual institutions may find it difficult to depart substantially from established practices when other influential actors continue to rely on conventional indicators and prestige signals.

Coordinated reform can reduce this first-mover disadvantage by creating sufficiently broad alignment around alternative practices.

Coordination can also help move beyond the inertia that is reinforced by cultural resistance and the interests of those who benefit from the current “prestige economy”. In addition, different actors (e.g., research performing organizations and funders) may fail to understand the motives and actions of other actors, and be unaware of how their intentions, may in fact, align.

At the same time, the urgency for coordinated solutions is rapidly increasing as foundational pillars of the research system are under unprecedented pressure ([Hanson et al., 2024](#); [Beigel et al., 2025](#)). The system is reaching a breaking point where open access growth is stalling, equity gaps are worsening, peer review is under unsustainable strain, and fraudulent activity is seriously threatening the integrity of the scholarly record ([Richardson et al., 2025](#)).

A coordinated reform ecosystem is crucial in light of the deep interdependencies between the various problems different reform initiatives are trying to address

([Waltman, 2025](#)). Without coordination between reform initiatives, individual initiatives can realize only modest incremental improvements, and the more fundamental problems in the research system are unlikely to be addressed. Reform initiatives need to move to a next phase in which they operate more synergistically in a coordinated reform ecosystem, aligning their agendas where possible and relevant, and striving to optimally reinforce each other's activities. Moving to this next phase will make it easier for researchers, policymakers, and other actors to engage with reform initiatives and will therefore strengthen the effectiveness of these initiatives.

The need to move to a coordinated reform ecosystem is increasingly being recognized. Within the assessment reform landscape, there is increasing collaboration between different initiatives, for instance between CoARA and DORA ([2025](#)) and between the initiatives participating in [DORA's National and International Initiatives Discussion Group](#). Likewise, the publishing reform landscape shows a growing recognition of the need to strengthen coordination between initiatives, for instance initiatives around diamond open access and the publish-review-curate model ([cOAlition S, 2025](#); [Diamond OA Summit, 2026](#)). At a higher level, efforts are increasingly being made to promote collaboration between reform initiatives working in closely related areas. An example is the agenda developed by Science Europe to strengthen coordination between reform around research culture, open science, and research assessment ([Saenen & Morris, 2026](#)).

Coordinating assessment and publishing reform

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In November 2025, ASAPbio, CWTS, DORA, and ISC organized a workshop in Pisa, Italy to strengthen coordination between research assessment and scholarly publishing reform. The workshop reflects the commitment of our four organizations to move toward a coordinated reform ecosystem, in line with the strategic priorities of each of our organizations. Strengthening coordination between assessment and publishing reform is a strategic priority for ISC and ASAPbio. CWTS has a similar strategic priority, linking assessment and publishing reform to a broader reform agenda around research culture (CWTS, 2026). Likewise, DORA's mission has been closely connected to scholarly communication since its founding by researchers, editors, and publishers in 2012 in response to the misuse of journal-based metrics in research assessment. Over the past thirteen years, DORA has continued to engage publishers as key partners in reform and is now extending this work through the co-creation of *A Practical Guide to Implementing Responsible Research Assessment in Scholarly Communication*, aimed at helping publishers, editors, and infrastructure providers align scholarly communication practices with responsible research assessment principles.

The four organizations consider coordination between research assessment and scholarly publishing reform to be highly urgent, on the one hand because overreliance on publication-based metrics in research evaluations remains one of the biggest obstacles to assessment reform and, on the other hand, because a lack of progress in assessment reform will impede publishing reform. Without coordination between assessment and publishing reform, reform in both areas is unlikely to be successful. Coordination allows for the development of new, context-sensitive and mission-aligned practices that match today's diverse

scientific realities. In the absence of coordination, reforms risk sending conflicting signals to researchers and institutions, fragmenting collective efforts toward a more open, rigorous, inclusive, and societally responsive research system.

Building on last year's Pisa workshop, we have set in motion a number of actions (Figure 2). These include three action groups focused on areas where closer coordination between the publishing and assessment reform communities has the greatest potential to accelerate change:



Figure 2. Toward a coordinated reform ecosystem.

Action Groups

Trust Indicators – Exploring how information about the provenance, review and reliability of scholarly contributions can support responsible assessment with qualitative indicators of trust necessary to confidently look beyond legacy venue-based metrics. This work will be organized mostly through a NISO working group (comprising publishers, preprint servers, indexers, infrastructures, librarians and others), focused on output-level trust markers, coordinated by DORA and the Center for Open Science. In addition, ISC is working with a group of scholarly publishers and the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) to develop trust markers at the level of journals.

Beyond the Article – Addressing the recognition of research contributions beyond conventional journal articles. This initiative aims to elevate the status of non-traditional research outputs – such as data, code, policy reports and public outreach – so they are valued contributions in research assessment. The group's key focus is on building consensus on norms, developing shared frameworks for recognizing and crediting these diverse contributions, and strengthening coordination across the research ecosystem.

Global Assessment Glossary – Exploring whether a shared language for researcher assessment can be identified while remaining sensitive to differences in mission, discipline, career stage, institutional role and research context. The group is considering a flexible, multi-dimensional framework or glossary focusing on researcher skills and competencies, activities, outputs and outcomes/impact that can support researcher mobility in a globally shifting landscape, and help inform organizations, including infrastructure providers, on what evidence assessment approaches may require to realize qualitative evaluation.

These action groups seek to strengthen alignment across existing initiatives rather than create new structures or duplicate ongoing efforts.

Call to action

07

We envision a diverse and interconnected reform ecology, in which initiatives focused on different issues, sectors, countries, regions, disciplines, and communities contribute their unique expertise, perspectives, and capacities. Just as a healthy knowledge ecology depends on the interaction of many actors, perspectives, and forms of expertise, a healthy reform ecosystem depends on both diversity and coordination.

While coordination between reform initiatives is of critical importance, the aim should not be to create a single homogeneous reform movement. Rather, coordination should foster alignment, shared learning, and mutual reinforcement where useful and relevant, while preserving the autonomy and distinct missions of individual initiatives. Coordination provides a mechanism for addressing shared systemic challenges while preserving the independence, diversity, and accountability of the participating initiatives.

With stronger coordination between reform initiatives, we foresee a number of benefits for different stakeholders. **For reform initiatives**, there is the potential for increased reach, impact, and legitimacy through coordination. There is greater efficiency through reduced duplication of effort. There is clearer collective messaging, which can translate into stronger leverage with research performing organizations and funders. Ultimately, there is a greater chance for durable success when compared to working in isolation.

For research performing and research funding organizations, supporting coordinated initiatives reduces the organizational labor associated with assessing and implementing multiple individual campaigns. There is a reduced risk of misaligned reforms being simultaneously deployed. Leadership can give clearer signals of policy changes and better explain their implementation. Adoption of coordinated reforms allows organizations to benefit from collective experimentation and shared learning across the research system, while retaining the flexibility needed to align assessment with their own missions and contexts.

For publishers and other infrastructure providers, contributing to coordinated efforts provides an opportunity to help strengthen the technical, social and ethical foundations of the scholarly publishing system based on clear information on what the research community needs to achieve its goals. It reduces the effort required to determine what features, products, and services are most valued. It can help prioritize the needs of science and society.

Lastly, **for researchers**, in particular those earlier in their careers and also internationally mobile researchers, strengthening coordination will ease their path to understanding and navigating the reform landscape and contributing to reform efforts. The landscape currently contains a dizzying array of different initiatives, and researchers can struggle to quickly grasp which ones are important to attend to. Researchers are better served by coordinated outreach with clear relevance to their goals and needs. Coordination should reduce conflicting criteria and double burden, improve transparency and predictability, recognize diverse contributions, protect researchers during transitions between old and new systems, and empower researchers to play an increasing role in designing and evaluating reforms.

To strengthen coordination between research assessment reform and scholarly publishing reform, we call on **research assessment and scholarly publishing reform initiatives** to reinforce their collaboration and explore opportunities to align their agendas where possible and relevant. This coordination will enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives, both individually and collectively. As a concrete way for initiatives to strengthen their coordination, we invite initiatives to consider joining the above-mentioned action groups that are working on a number of actions resulting from last year's Pisa workshop.

Coordination between reform initiatives may of course go beyond the areas of research assessment and scholarly publishing. We encourage **reform initiatives** to explore broader opportunities for coordination and alignment, for instance in areas such as open science, reproducibility, research integrity, equity, diversity, and inclusion, and research culture. A concrete way in which initiatives can work on strengthening coordination is by joining DORA's National and International Initiatives Discussion Group. This participant-driven community of practice provides a space for national and international initiatives from across the research system to

exchange insights, align efforts, and explore opportunities for collaboration. Although the group is organized around responsible research assessment, it welcomes all initiatives that engage with assessment reform, whether as a central objective or as part of a broader agenda for improving research systems and culture.

Public and private research funders, along with other organizations in the research system, play a crucial role in the reform landscape by providing financial support to reform initiatives. We call on **research funding organizations and other supporters of reform initiatives** to encourage their supported initiatives to coordinate their activities with each other, and to enable coordination where it can increase coherence, reduce unnecessary duplication and strengthen collective learning. This action is essential to advance coordination and alignment in the reform ecosystem and to maximize the effectiveness of the financial investments made in reform initiatives. By taking a systemic perspective, funders of the initiatives can help create the conditions in which individual reform initiatives contribute to collective progress, increasing the long-term impact and sustainability of investments in research reform. By supporting both diversity and connectivity in the reform landscape, they can amplify the impact of individual investments and help strengthen the reform ecosystem as a whole.

Finally, we call on **research performing and research funding organizations** to approach assessment and publishing reform as interconnected elements in a broader reform ecosystem rather than as separate reform agendas. Lasting change will come from furthering alignment between the policies and practices that shape what knowledge is produced, how it is communicated, and what contributions are rewarded. The challenge is one of collective stewardship: creating shared conditions in which reform initiatives reinforce one another across institutions, disciplines, sectors, and regions. Too often, reform agendas around research assessment, scholarly publishing, open science, research integrity, and research culture are treated as separate issues, led by different communities, funded through different mechanisms, and implemented through disconnected processes.

Research performing and research funding organizations often work together in associations, networks, and alliances. Researchers are also

united across institutions and countries by national and international scholarly associations and learned societies for the advancement of research and scholarly communication in specific fields and disciplines. These **umbrella organizations** can play an essential role in overcoming fragmentation by taking a holistic perspective on the wider reform landscape, developing a deep understanding of the connections between different reform agendas, and helping to strengthen these connections. Rather than asking which reform initiatives to prioritize, they could ask how the various initiatives they engage with reinforce one another and how they can contribute to greater alignment across initiatives. Progress depends crucially on building the shared understanding, relationships, and collective momentum needed for coordinated change across the research system.

When developing new policies and practices in areas such as research assessment, scholarly publishing, open science, research integrity, and research culture, **individual research performing and research funding organizations** need to consider how changes in different areas can be aligned with each other. For instance, if an organization wishes to promote preprinting and diamond open access, its assessment practices need to be aligned with this, which may for instance mean the organization needs to move away from assessment practices that incentivize publishing in conventional ‘high-impact’ journals. Conversely, if an organization wishes to move away from evaluation practices centered around journal publications, it should consider whether its scholarly publishing policies and investments support the broader range of contributions it intends to recognize. This may include increasing training, support and/or investment in socio-technical infrastructures for sharing preprints, data, code and other research outputs, as well as open peer review and other forms of scholarly communication. Without aligning assessment and publishing reform, organizations are unlikely to succeed in changing their way of working in either of these areas.

A concrete example of an initiative taken by research performing organizations to align research assessment and scholarly publishing reform is the Vision on Publication Culture developed by the universities in the Netherlands. While the implementation of this initiative is still in an early stage, it represents an important complement to the Recognition &

Rewards activities of the Dutch universities. The initiative addresses how changes in assessment practices need to be accompanied by changes in scholarly communication norms and publication practices, and as such it may provide valuable inspiration for similar efforts elsewhere.

Conclusion

Research assessment and scholarly publishing help determine what knowledge is produced, what contributions are recognized, and ultimately what science is able to achieve for society. The challenge before us is therefore not simply one of reforming assessment or publishing, but of stewarding the research system as a whole. By strengthening coordination across initiatives, sectors, disciplines, and regions, we can create a reform ecosystem that is more than the sum of its parts: one that rewards quality over prestige, values diverse contributions, supports openness and integrity, and enables research to serve the public good. The time has come to move from parallel efforts to shared action. Together, we can build a research system worthy of the trust and aspirations that society places in it.

List of acronyms

08

- AI: Artificial Intelligence
- AJOL: African Journals Online
- ASAPbio: Accelerating Science and Publication in Biology
- CAPES: Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel
- CLACSO-FOLEC: Latin American Forum on Research Assessment
- CoARA: Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment
- COPE: Committee on Publication Ethics
- CWTS: Centre for Science and Technology Studies
- DOI: Digital Object Identifier
- DORA: Declaration on Research Assessment
- DST: DST Centre for Policy Research
- FWF: Austrian Science Fund
- ISC: International Science Council
- NISO: National Information Standards Organization
- OA: Open Access
- PID: Persistent Identifier
- PLOS: Public Library of Science
- PRC: Publish-Review-Curate
- RPT: Review, Promotion, and Tenure
- RRA: Responsible Research Assessment
- RoRI: Research on Research Institute
- SPARC: Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition
- UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

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