

ABOARD DECLARATIVE STATEMENTS ON OPEN RESEARCH AND RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH ASSESSMENT

ABOARD's objective is the production of a roadmap to develop system-level incentivisation of Open Research and responsible research assessment practices in Ireland. These Declarative Statements are the result of a series of Collective Intelligence Workshops held between March and May 2025 as part of ABOARD's Work Package #4, with four different stakeholder groups:

- Researchers in Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences (AHSS)
- Early-Career Researchers
- Researchers in STEM fields
- Funding Organizations

The statements summarize each cohort's views on **Ambition**, necessary **Enabling Structures** and useful **Indicators** in relation to the incentivization of Open Research practices, the responsible use of research metrics and responsible research assessment practices.

AHSS Researchers:

Ambition

The AHSS community deploys research practices and methods which result in **outputs of a range of types** - including creative outputs, and there is strong ambition for these **outputs to be recognised and incentivised** systematically.

AHSS researchers **engage profoundly with a range of publics**, this must also be incentivised. The arguments for Open Access are strong, but **academic choice in respect of selecting publication venue** must be paramount.

Enabling Structures

IReL and repositories must be strengthened to enable Open Access to be affordable and consistently available for researchers.

Researchers based in **TUs must be enabled to undertake research at an appropriate level.**

Indicators

Indicators that measure the extent of the structural change required to meet the ambition **should measure inputs not outputs** – measure funders on what **support** they give to OA, RPOs on what support they give to support Open Research.

Research quality cannot be measured by FWCI – ask for **disciplinary-agreed measures of quality and measure** these (*the UK's REF main-panel and sub-panel definitions are an example*)

Early Career Researchers:

Ambition

The Early Career Community has a **very strong ambition to deliver on Open Data and Open Access**. While **public engagement** is very important, it should be **incentivised as appropriate rather than be mandated for all researchers**. (One possible method of incentivisation would be to 'count' public engagement activities as research outputs). There is an interest in **not-for-profit publishing models** among ECRs.

Enabling Structures

Engaging properly with Open Access and Open Data is hard – small **grants** (e.g. for infrastructure for open data and data sharing, data stewards etc), **time for training**, and **meaningful recognition** of the activities are crucial for success. While these **incentives would be transformational**, their introduction **cannot mean that Open Research practices become 'standard' expectations**, as researchers are already overloaded.

ECRs who are **precarious** will be far **less able to engage in Open Research** practices.

Indicators

Incentivising Open Research and RRA are best conceived of as constituent components of research culture.

The government should issue a **sectoral research culture survey** which captures **a range of research culture issues** including RRA and support provided for OR by institutions. As part of this, both **data on open outputs** (including publications and open data indicators such as Number/proportion of pre-prints or code shared, datasets shared in FAIR mode) and indicators/case-studies that capture the **impact of research on non-academic beneficiaries** could be gathered. Indicators that **track adoption of OR practices** among funders should also be developed.

STEM Researchers:

Ambition

The STEM community is very **knowledgeable** about and in **support** of open research but there are **major impediments** to researchers engaging, even the very keen. RRA is supported in theory but there are **concerns about the feasibility of narrative CVs** when there are high numbers of applicants and an overall **plea not to 'ignore numbers altogether'**. The community is alive to the influence of rankings and there is a desire to have that tension addressed by sectoral and institutional leaders.

Enabling Structures

There is a need for **infrastructural** (infrastructures in which to deposit meta-data appropriately and securely, and proper career pathways for data stewards should be considered components), **training-based and financial supports** for Open Research. APCs create major biases in favour of wealthy organisations. Health researchers face particular **barriers** in terms of open data when it comes to **GDPR and anonymisation requirements**.

This community also emphasized that **Open Research/RRA requirements cannot be adding more to researcher load**.

Indicators

This cohort recommends development of **indicators to measure open data** (with appropriate levels of privacy and data protection) and **data sets**.

As with other cohorts, **institutional measurement of open research enablers** rather than outputs is deemed most appropriate - not 'how many public engagement activities has your institution recorded' (as not appropriate for all researchers to engage with this) but, for example, 'how many staff in this area have you hired?' etc.

Funding Organizations:

Ambition

The research funder cohort has a **high level of ambition** with respect to Open Research, although there was acknowledgement that some elements of the traditional conception of 'research excellence' may be legitimate and that this is far from a settled matter. Ambition was **particularly evident regarding public engagement** and ensuring that the **outputs of research are accessible to non-academic beneficiaries**. This is considered to be especially significant in terms of linking with policymakers and of ensuring access to the benefits and outputs of research to marginalised groups - the **links between the 'open' and EDI agendas was strongly felt** overall.

Enabling Structures

The research funders feel that there is a significant requirement to **'educate' policymakers about the fundamental importance of Open Research** (i.e. it should not be viewed principally as a set of 'technical' matters) and RRA, as well as about their complexity and their necessary imbrication with other research policy agendas. Funders acknowledge **DFHERIS particularly as a crucial player** and argue that the Department needed a **higher risk appetite** if genuine research assessment reform is to happen (and should consider **piloting changes as a first step**). Funders have an appetite to explore a **single CV format** across the system to **include narrative elements**. Funding for data stewards and an RRA person in the HEA (akin to their 'gender' post) was recommended. The evidence-for policy- agenda **must include charities** and must include **access to research publications** for those working in funding organizations and as civil servants. A culture of appropriate **citation of research within the policymaking community** is critical.

Indicators

There is a strong feeling among funders that any indicators needed **not be reliant on Scopus or similar proprietary systems** (although some systems, such as Overton are considered unproblematic). The community has a lot of expertise in designing **research culture and EDI indicators** in particular and this **should be leaned into** when designing system level indicators. A **national research culture survey** was strongly endorsed to find a baseline from which improvements can be measured. There are numerous strong examples, both nationally and internationally, that could be drawn on in designing such a survey.

Advisory, support, advice and monitoring functions

A range of views on methods for effective dialogue were put forward, with some endorsing a national forum while others articulated the benefits of disciplinary-based dialogue mechanisms. The work that has occurred on Research Integrity as a 'dialogic top-down' process was effective in changing culture; there may therefore be merit in exploring whether the practices deployed there could be emulated to advance the Open Research and RRA agendas.



To learn more about our project and our partners visit the [ABOARD website](https://www.aboard.ie) or contact us at ABOARD@ucc.ie.

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