

University Committee for Advancing REsearch quality (UCARE)

We provide tailored advice to the VU community to further improve research quality in a broad sense, taking into account the VU research strategy.

Vision

The quality of research results from several components, such as individual researchers, content embedded in disciplines, inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations, policies at different levels, and the amount of resources available. We focus on making these different components explicit and understandable, and how they are related: UCARE leverages the disciplinary diversity and independence of our members to systematically analyze these components and their interactions. What follows is tailored advice to research units on how to further improve research quality, based on the VU Research Strategy 2023-2033.

Tasks

Research quality is understood broadly to include (as preconditions for research quality) the following components:

- scientific ambition (themes, research strategy, interdisciplinarity, collaboration with community partners, etc.)
- academic culture (social safety, inclusiveness, openness)
- personnel management (diversity, talent management, team science, recognition and reward)
- open science (involving stakeholders at all stages, transparent research process, FAIR data, open access publishing)

We provide:

To the Executive Board (rector magnificus): solicited advice on final reports of research assessments. UCARE receives the self-evaluation report produced by the unit, the final report and the administrative response (conclusions drawn by the faculty board and/or directorate of the research institute). On the basis of these documents, UCARE prepares an overarching memorandum with its observations, after which the rector magnificus, together with the chairperson and secretary of UCARE, invites the research unit for a discussion about the past period and the beginning of a new evaluation cycle.

Unsolicited advice: UCARE is invited, if it deems it necessary, to also give unsolicited advice regarding the strategy, quality, profiling of research, especially when it comes to faculty and unit-transcending issues.

To research units (generally faculties/institutes): solicited advice. UCARE can be consulted as a 'critical friend' by faculties for e.g. self-evaluations or the start-up of a new evaluation cycle.

UCARE can advise in conversation form on the mission, vision, and its elaboration in strategy of the research unit, using the above components.

Composition

UCARE has a chairperson and is supported by a secretary from the Institutional Affairs Office. Committee members are not representatives of their faculty and are expected to be able to see beyond the boundaries of their own faculty: they are creative, think interdisciplinary and are aware of new developments in the research field. Faculty administrators and directors of research institutes cannot serve on UCARE.

The committee includes two members from each domain (alpha, STEM, gamma, medical) who are assistant, associate or full professors. When a vacancy occurs, relevant faculty are asked to propose a candidate. ¹The candidate is submitted by the official secretary to the College of Deans (CvD). The CvD advises the Executive Board on the appointment of UCARE members. In principle, the members are appointed for a period of three years (with a possibility of reappointment), with the aim of always replacing only part of the committee so that the knowledge and experience in the committee remains assured. Membership may continue for some time after possible emeritus status.

Different from VUO:

On topic: the VU research committee (VUO, research portfolio holders from faculty boards) do not deal with the topic of research quality assurance (except when the SEP itself is evaluated or renewed and faculties are consulted/informed about it).

By position: UCARE independently advises on research quality in a broad sense. VUO includes representatives of faculty boards with financial and managerial responsibilities. Placing research quality with UCARE prevents quality goals from being governed by financial or managerial interests.

Relationship with other relevant forums:

OPO/STOK:

Education and research are closely linked within VU. UCARE's ambition is to partner with the Steering Committee on Educational Quality (STOK) when it comes to components that are complementary to both committees. The VUO/UCARE relationship is similar to OPO/STOK.

IBVU:

Although UCARE also includes social relevance in its analysis of the various components, advice on this is given only in the context of research quality. Where necessary, UCARE will refer to the Impact Board VU (IBVU).

¹ CvD oversees the academic quality, integrity and reputation of the university