

APPENDIX II: Score Grid

This document provides a working framework for developing progressive assessment tables for indicators and criteria related to the quality of scientific research and institutional support in the evaluation of research institutions in Slovenia. Descriptive assessments and numerical scores are assigned at the level of individual indicators.

Assessment Scale

Score	Rating
0	MISSING OR INSUFFICIENT
1	WEAK
2	FAIR
3	VERY GOOD
4	EXCELLENT

I. SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE

1. Contribution to the advancement of science and knowledge

Sub-criteria:

1.1: Proven contribution to the advancement of science and knowledge with a representative set of research outputs.

Score	Reference description
0	No convincing evidence is provided that the research institution has contributed to the advancement of science and knowledge. Research outputs are absent, insufficient, not representative, or not clearly linked to scientific progress, and the findings from the site visit do not provide relevant additional support.
1	The institution provides limited evidence of contribution to science and knowledge. The exemplar set of research outputs is narrow or only marginally relevant to the field, with limited indication of originality, significance, or scholarly influence. Evidence gathered during the site visit provides only limited additional confirmation.
2	The institution demonstrates a credible but moderate contribution to the advancement of science and knowledge. A representative set of research outputs is provided, although the evidence of originality, quality, significance, or influence is uneven across outputs or fields.

	Findings from the site visit may support the assessment, but do not fully resolve the unevenness of the evidence.
3	The institution demonstrates a strong and well-substantiated contribution to the advancement of science and knowledge. The representative set of research outputs shows clear quality, originality, relevance within relevant scientific fields. This assessment is further supported, where appropriate, by findings from the site visit, including interviews and examination of relevant research conditions or equipment.
4	The institution demonstrates an outstanding and clearly evidenced contribution to the advancement of science and knowledge. The representative set of research outputs is of high quality. The assessment is coherently supported by evidence from the site visit, including interviews and, where relevant, examination of equipment. The institutional research output shows originality and significance. Compelling evidence was found about substantial scholarly influence, including contributions that shape or advance the relevant field internationally.

2. Critical self-assessment, actions and implementation of strategic directions regarding scientific excellence

Sub-criteria:

2.1: An appropriate critical assessment of the research institution's scientific excellence, including actions taken to eliminate any shortcomings and improve scientific excellence.

2.3: An appropriate critical assessment of the research institution's performance in implementing its mission and strategy as well as its strategic, long-term and development objectives in terms of scientific excellence.

Score	Reference description
0	No convincing evidence is provided that the institution critically assesses its scientific excellence or its implementation of mission, strategy, strategic, long-term and development objectives in relation to scientific excellence. Shortcomings, corrective actions, and strategic progress are absent, unclear, or insufficiently documented.
1	The institution provides a limited or mainly descriptive self-assessment of scientific excellence and strategic implementation. Identified shortcomings, related actions, and links to the mission, strategy, or strategic, long-term and development objectives are weakly developed, unevenly evidenced, or insufficiently connected to improvement.
2	The institution demonstrates an adequate but uneven critical assessment of scientific excellence and of progress in implementing its mission, strategy, strategic, long-term and

	development objectives. Some shortcomings are identified and actions are described, but the evidence of systematic follow-up, prioritisation, and improvement in scientific excellence is only partial.
3	The institution provides a clear, evidence-based, and substantially critical assessment of scientific excellence and strategic implementation. Shortcomings are identified, actions are adopted and followed up, and there is credible evidence that these actions support improvement in scientific excellence and progress towards mission, strategy, and strategic, long-term and development objectives.
4	The institution demonstrates a comprehensive, rigorous, and well-evidenced critical self-assessment of scientific excellence and strategic implementation. Shortcomings are systematically identified, prioritised, and addressed through effective actions, with strong evidence of continuous improvement, strategic learning, and substantial progress towards mission, strategy, and long-term, strategic and development objectives in scientific excellence.

II. SOCIETAL IMPACT

1. Contribution to the well-being of society and the environment

Sub-criteria:

1.1: Proven contribution to the transfer of knowledge and research outputs into practice (i.e. technological progress, innovation, solutions to societal and environmental challenges, understanding of phenomena, changes in practices, legislation, strategies, habits) at the local, national or international level with a representative set of impact case studies.

Score	Reference description
0	No convincing evidence is provided that the institution has contributed to the transfer of knowledge or research outputs into practice. Impact case studies are absent, insufficient, not representative, or do not demonstrate a clear link between research activities and benefits for society or the environment. Findings from the site visit do not provide relevant additional support.
1	The institution provides limited evidence of knowledge transfer or societal and environmental contribution. The impact case studies are narrow, weakly documented, mainly descriptive, or only marginally connected to research outputs, with limited evidence of uptake, use, change, or benefit at local, national, or international level. Evidence gathered during the site visit provides only limited additional confirmation.

2	The institution demonstrates a credible but moderate contribution to the transfer of knowledge and research outputs into practice. A representative set of impact case studies is provided, but the evidence of concrete uptake, practical use, innovation, policy or behavioural change, environmental benefit, or wider societal relevance is uneven or only partly substantiated. Findings from the site visit may support the assessment, but do not fully resolve the unevenness of the evidence.
3	The institution demonstrates a strong and well-substantiated contribution to society and the environment through the transfer of knowledge and research outputs into practice. The impact case studies provide clear links to underlying research, evidence of uptake, other forms of tangible trace in practice or meaningful benefits. This assessment is further supported, where appropriate, by findings from the site visit, including interviews and relevant evidence.
4	The institution demonstrates an outstanding, clearly evidenced, and significant contribution to the well-being of society and the environment. The representative set of impact case studies shows substantial and traceable transfer of knowledge and research outputs into practice, with compelling evidence of durable, wide-reaching, or highly influential effects on technology, innovation, societal or environmental challenges at local, national, or international level. The assessment is coherently supported by evidence from the site visit, including evidence that consideration of impact is embedded in the institutional research culture.

2. Critical self-assessment, actions and implementation of strategic directions regarding societal impact

Sub-criteria:

2.1: An appropriate critical assessment of the research institution's performance in knowledge transfer, creating societal impact or social engagement, including actions taken to eliminate any shortcomings and improve societal impact.

2.3: An appropriate critical assessment of the research institution's performance in implementing its mission and strategy as well as its strategic, long-term and development objectives in terms of societal impact.

Score	Reference description
0	No convincing evidence is provided that the institution critically assesses its performance in knowledge transfer, societal impact, social engagement, or the implementation of its mission, strategy, and long-term development objectives in relation to societal impact.

	Shortcomings, corrective actions, strategic progress, and improvement measures are absent, unclear, or insufficiently documented.
1	The institution provides limited or mainly descriptive self-assessment of knowledge transfer, societal impact, social engagement, and strategic implementation. Identified shortcomings and actions are weakly developed, unevenly evidenced, or insufficiently connected to mission, strategy, long-term, strategic and development objectives, or improvement in societal impact.
2	The institution demonstrates an adequate but uneven critical assessment of knowledge transfer, societal impact and progress in implementing its mission, strategy, and long-term development objectives. Some shortcomings are identified and corrective actions are described, but evidence of systematic follow-up, prioritisation, learning, and improvement in societal impact is only partial.
3	The institution provides a clear, evidence-based, and substantially critical assessment of its performance in knowledge transfer, societal impact, social engagement, and strategic implementation. Shortcomings are identified, relevant actions are adopted and followed up, and there is credible evidence that these actions support improvement in societal impact and progress towards mission, strategy, and long-term, strategic and development objectives.
4	The institution demonstrates a comprehensive, rigorous, and well-evidenced critical self-assessment of knowledge transfer, societal impact, and strategic implementation. Shortcomings are systematically identified, prioritised, and addressed through effective actions, with strong evidence of continuous improvement, strategic learning, and substantial progress towards mission, strategy, and long-term, strategic and development objectives in societal impact.

III. QUALITY OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

1. Strategic management

Sub-criteria:

1.1: Appropriateness, coherence, ambition, and the feasibility of the research institution's strategy, research implementation plan, and strategic, long-term and development objectives.

1.2: Performance in achieving the indicator targets set by the research institution.

Score	Reference description
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0	No convincing evidence is provided that the institution has an appropriate, coherent, ambitious, or feasible strategy, research implementation plan, or strategic, long-term and development objectives. Indicator targets are absent, unclear, not measurable, or there is no evidence of performance in achieving them. Findings from the site visit do not provide relevant additional support.
1	The institution provides limited evidence of strategic management. The strategy, research implementation plan, or long-term and development objectives are weakly developed, insufficiently coherent, only partly feasible, or lack ambition. Indicator targets are only partly defined, and evidence of progress towards them is limited, fragmented, or weakly documented. The Self-Evaluation Report is mainly descriptive or/and shows limited evidence of collective institutional deliberation about the mission and strategic orientation. Evidence gathered during the site visit provides only limited additional confirmation.
2	The institution demonstrates an adequate but uneven approach to strategic management. The strategy, research implementation plan, and strategic, long-term and development objectives are generally appropriate and feasible, but their coherence, ambition, or prioritisation is only partly convincing. Performance against indicator targets is reported, but achievement is uneven or only partially substantiated. Findings from the site visit may support the assessment, but do not fully resolve the unevenness of the evidence. The Self-Evaluation Report shows some initial steps towards a more effective system in which self-reflection of the staff and leadership on strategic orientation leads to follow-up action.
3	The institution demonstrates a clear, coherent, ambitious, and feasible strategic management framework. The strategy, research implementation plan, and strategic, long-term and development objectives are well aligned and supported by credible evidence. Indicator targets are defined and mostly achieved, with documented progress and a clear basis for monitoring performance. This assessment is further supported, where appropriate, by findings from the site visit. Self-evaluation is solid, reflects the inclusion of all institutional staff and leads to continuous improvements.
4	The institution demonstrates an excellent, integrated, and evidence-based strategic management framework. The institutional research culture is highly developed, with collective self-reflection and a shared commitment to optimising and further developing the institution's strategic orientation. Consequently, the strategy, research implementation plan, and strategic, long-term and development objectives are highly appropriate, coherent, ambitious, feasible, and mutually reinforcing, and are consistently reflected in implementation evidence across relevant criteria and indicators. Indicator targets are

clearly defined, systematically monitored, and convincingly achieved or exceeded, providing strong evidence of effective strategic steering and institutional development. The assessment is coherently supported by the Self-Evaluation Report and by evidence from the site visit, including interviews.

2. HR policy, rejuvenation of the research community, PhD training

Sub-criteria:

2.1: An appropriate human resources management strategy in line with the strategic direction of the research institution and the appropriate professional support, particularly through introduction or acquisition of the HR Excellence in Research award (Human Resources Strategy for Researchers – HRS4R).

2.2: Actions to rejuvenate the research community (e.g. diversity in researchers' career stages), including to attract new generations of researchers and to ensure a high-quality training for young researchers and the monitoring of doctoral candidates.

2.3: The effective involvement of R1 and R2 researchers (including the mechanism of young researchers) in research activities and outputs (e.g. (co-)authors of publications and other outputs).

2.4: Appropriate procedures to assess researchers' activities (e.g. when promoting to a higher academic rank or recruiting new research staff), taking into account the diverse range of activities and contributions of researchers in accordance with the principles of open science and the guidelines of the European Research Area.

Score	Reference description
0	No convincing evidence is provided that the institution has an appropriate human resources management strategy, professional HR support, or alignment between HR policy and strategic direction. Measures for rejuvenating the research community, attracting or training young researchers, supervising doctoral candidates, involving R1 and R2 researchers in research activities and outputs, or assessing researchers' diverse contributions are absent, unclear, or insufficiently documented. Findings from the site visit do not provide relevant additional support.
1	The institution provides limited evidence of a coherent HR management strategy and related professional support. Actions to rejuvenate the research community, support PhD training, supervise doctoral candidates, and involve R1 and R2 researchers in research activities and outputs are fragmented, mainly descriptive, or inconsistently implemented. Plans for reform towards responsible researcher assessment are still under development. Assessment procedures, for example in recruitment, promotion, or allocation of funds, only

	partly or poorly recognise diverse research activities, open science principles, or European Research Area guidelines, and there remains significant reliance on proxy indicators such as journal impact factors or similar metrics. Evidence gathered during the site visit provides only limited additional confirmation. The Self-Evaluation Report is mainly descriptive or/and shows limited evidence of self-reflection on the human resource management leading to concrete follow-up action.
2	The institution demonstrates an adequate but uneven approach to HR policy, rejuvenation of the research community, and doctoral training. The HR strategy is generally aligned with institutional priorities, but implementation is only partial or inconsistently evidenced. Actions to attract and support younger researchers, supervise doctoral candidates, and involve R1 and R2 researchers in research activities and outputs are present, but their effectiveness varies. Reform of researcher assessment (for e.g. recruitment, promotion, and allocation of funds) is well planned, realistic, and acknowledges diverse researcher contributions and open science principles in line with international recommendations. However, implementation is still at an early stage, although the research community is aware of the planned changes and findings from the site visit support the credibility of the reform direction. So does the Self-Evaluation Report.
3	The institution demonstrates a clear, coherent, and well-supported HR policy that is aligned with its strategic direction and supported by appropriate professional structures. It has effective actions to rejuvenate the research community, attract and train young researchers, supervise doctoral candidates, and involve R1 and R2 researchers meaningfully in research activities and outputs. Reform towards responsible assessment of researchers is convincingly planned and well under way, with progress substantiated in the Self-Evaluation Report and observed during the site visit through interviews, with particular attention to young researchers in the R1 and R2 career stages. Self-evaluation practice is solid, long-term oriented and supports the decisions on continuous improvements.
4	The institution demonstrates an excellent, integrated, and evidence-based HR policy framework that strongly supports its strategic direction and research development. The institutional research culture is highly developed, with critical self-reflection informing management decisions and well-planned long-term action. HR management and professional support are systematically embedded, monitored, and improved. The institution provides compelling evidence of successful rejuvenation of the research community, effective attraction and development of new generations of researchers, high-quality PhD training, systematic supervision of doctoral candidates, and strong involvement

	of R1 and R2 researchers in research activities and outputs. Reform towards responsible researcher assessment is at an advanced stage and, for example in recruitment and promotion procedures, is consistently implemented and fully recognises diverse researcher contributions in line with open science principles and international recommendations. The assessment is coherently supported by evidence from the site visit, including interviews, especially with researchers at the R1 and R2 career stages.
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3. Research infrastructure and equipment

Sub-criteria:

3.1: Proven quality and appropriateness of research infrastructure and equipment.

3.2: An appropriate planned strategic upgrading and modernization of research infrastructure and equipment.

3.3: Mechanisms allowing research equipment and infrastructure sharing with external researchers.

Score	Reference description
0	No convincing evidence is provided that the institution has research infrastructure and equipment of appropriate quality or relevance to its research activities and strategic objectives. Plans for upgrading or modernisation are absent, unclear, or not strategically justified, and mechanisms for sharing infrastructure or equipment with external researchers are absent or insufficiently documented. Findings from the site visit, including examination of equipment and infrastructure, do not provide relevant additional support.
1	The institution provides limited evidence of the quality, appropriateness, or strategic relevance of its research infrastructure and equipment. Available infrastructure appears uneven, outdated, insufficiently maintained, or only partly aligned with research needs. Upgrade plans are fragmented, weakly prioritised, or not clearly linked to strategic objectives, and sharing mechanisms with external researchers are informal, limited, or weakly implemented. Evidence gathered during the site visit, including examination of equipment and other infrastructure, provides only limited additional confirmation. The Self-Evaluation Report is mainly descriptive or/and shows limited evidence of self-reflection leading to concrete follow-up action in improving the infrastructure and equipment.
2	The institution demonstrates an adequate but uneven research infrastructure and equipment environment. The quality and appropriateness of infrastructure are generally supported by evidence, but gaps remain in coverage, accessibility, maintenance, or alignment with research priorities. Strategic upgrading and modernisation are planned, but prioritisation, resources, timelines, or implementation evidence are only partly convincing.

	Mechanisms for external sharing exist, but their accessibility, transparency, or use by external researchers is limited or uneven. Findings from the site visit, including examination of equipment and other infrastructure, may support the assessment but do not fully resolve the unevenness of the evidence. The Self-Evaluation Report shows some initial steps towards a more effective system in which self-reflection leads to follow-up action and improvement.
3	The institution demonstrates good-quality and appropriate research infrastructure and equipment that are clearly aligned with its research profile, strategic objectives, and development needs. The findings from the site visit, including examination of equipment and other infrastructure confirmed this. Upgrade and modernisation plans are coherent, prioritised, and supported by credible evidence of implementation. Mechanisms for sharing infrastructure and equipment with external researchers are defined, accessible, and used in practice, contributing to collaboration and efficient use of resources. Self-evaluation is solid and supports the decisions on continuous improvements.
4	The institution demonstrates excellent, high-quality, and strategically appropriate research infrastructure and equipment that strongly support current and future research excellence, collaboration, and institutional development. The institutional research culture is on high level, including self-reflection and constant care for appropriate support in terms of infrastructure and equipment. Strategic upgrading and modernisation are systematic, well prioritised, realistically resourced, and clearly linked to long-term objectives. Infrastructure and equipment sharing with external researchers is governed by transparent, effective, and well-used mechanisms, providing strong evidence of openness, accessibility, collaboration, and efficient use of research resources.

4. Collaboration, knowledge transfer and diversity of funding sources

Sub-criteria:

4.1 Cooperation — academic collaboration: Proven scientific collaboration and actions to encourage collaboration with other research organisations (projects, programmes, strategies, processes) at the national, international or local level, including transdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research.

4.2 Cooperation — external partners and stakeholders: Proven collaboration and social engagement as well as actions to encourage social engagement and collaboration with organisations, institutions, companies and other partners from the social environment at the national, international or local level.

4.3 Knowledge transfer and innovation – professional support: Appropriate professional support for the transfer of knowledge into the social environment to achieve societal impact.

4.4 Knowledge transfer and innovation — early planning: Actions to encourage and implement early planning of knowledge transfer and to include potential societal impact in research design;

4.5 Funding sources: Diverse funding sources outside the block research funding system (e.g. industry, public sources (ministries, agencies, local communities), international projects).

Score	Reference description
0	No convincing evidence is provided for academic cooperation, cooperation with external partners and stakeholders, knowledge transfer, early planning of societal impact, or diverse funding outside block research funding. Scientific collaboration, social engagement, professional support for knowledge transfer, integration of impact into research design, and success in relevant national, international, industry, public, or prestigious funding schemes are absent, unclear, or insufficiently documented. Findings from the site visit do not provide relevant additional support.
1	The institution provides limited or fragmented evidence across the main dimensions of this indicator. Academic collaboration and cooperation with external partners are mostly occasional, individual-based, or weakly supported by institutional actions. Professional support for knowledge transfer is limited, and early planning of knowledge transfer or potential societal impact is not yet systematically embedded in research design. Funding outside the block research funding system is narrow, unstable, weakly evidenced, concentrated in only one or a few units, or lacks success in more competitive or prestigious schemes. The Self-Evaluation Report is mainly descriptive or/and shows limited evidence of self-reflection leading to concrete follow-up action in the items of this indicator.
2	The institution demonstrates an adequate but uneven approach to cooperation, knowledge transfer, innovation, and funding diversification. Academic cooperation with research organisations and cooperation with external partners or stakeholders are present, including some institutional actions to encourage collaboration, but their scope, intensity, interdisciplinarity, or strategic relevance varies. Professional support for knowledge transfer exists, and some attention is given to early planning of knowledge transfer and societal impact in research design, but implementation is partial or inconsistent. Funding sources outside the block research funding system are present, including some public, international, industry, or stakeholder-based sources, but diversification and success in highly competitive or prestigious funding schemes remain limited or uneven. Findings from the site visit may support the assessment, but do not fully resolve the unevenness of the evidence. The Self-

	Evaluation Report shows some initial steps towards a more effective system in which self-reflection leads to follow-up action and improvement.
3	The institution demonstrates a strong and well-supported approach to cooperation, knowledge transfer, innovation, and funding diversification. Academic cooperation is active, strategically encouraged, and includes relevant national, international, local, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, or transdisciplinary collaboration. Cooperation with external partners and stakeholders is well evidenced and contributes to social engagement and the practical relevance of research. Professional support for knowledge transfer is clearly organised, and early planning of knowledge transfer and potential societal impact is increasingly embedded in research design. Funding sources outside the block research funding system are diverse and credible, with evidence of success in competitive national or international funding and, where relevant, industry, public-sector, stakeholder-based, or prestigious schemes. The Self-Evaluation Report reflects a solid culture of continuous improvement through self-reflection and follow-up action.
4	The institution demonstrates an excellent, integrated, and evidence-based system for cooperation, knowledge transfer, innovation, and funding diversification including a robust mechanism of continuous improvement based in self-evaluation. Academic cooperation and cooperation with external partners are strategically steered, institutionally supported, broad in scope, sustained over a longer period, and demonstrably effective across relevant local, national, and international contexts, including interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary collaboration. Knowledge transfer is supported by strong professional structures, while early planning of knowledge transfer and potential societal impact is systematically embedded in research design and institutional practice. Funding outside the block research funding system is diverse, sustainable, and strategically important, with compelling evidence of success in competitive national and international sources and relevant prestigious funding schemes, as well as cooperation with industry, public bodies, local communities, or other stakeholders, where appropriate.

5. Internal system for ensuring the quality of research

Sub-criteria:

5.1: Appropriate internal institutional self-evaluation standards and procedures based on the criteria of scientific excellence, societal impact and quality of the institutional research environment, as well as on the implementation of the principles of open science, equal opportunities, and ethics and integrity (including mechanisms for identifying weaknesses and opportunities);

5.2: Appointed personnel, working bodies or committees in charge of conducting institutional self-evaluation, including appropriate representation of R1 and R2 researchers in these working bodies and committees, if relevant.

5.3: Mechanisms for adopting and implementing actions based on the conclusions of institutional self-evaluation and recommendations of external evaluations (evaluations of research programmes by ERC panels and external institutional evaluation), including the appropriateness of the actions themselves.

5.4: Procedures for defining strategic, long-term, and development objectives, strategy documents and a research implementation plan.

Score	Reference description
0	No convincing evidence is provided that the institution has an effective internal system for evaluation and improvement. Internal self-evaluation standards and procedures, responsible personnel or bodies, mechanisms for identifying weaknesses and opportunities, procedures for adopting actions based on self-evaluation or external evaluation recommendations, and procedures for defining strategic objectives and implementation plans are absent, unclear, or insufficiently documented. Research staff and other non-senior staff are unaware of a functioning quality assurance system.
1	The institution provides limited evidence of an internal quality system. Self-evaluation standards and procedures are incomplete, mainly descriptive, and not systematically connected to improvement. Responsible personnel or bodies may exist, but their roles, composition, or representation of R1 and R2 researchers are unclear. Follow-up actions and strategic planning procedures are vague, fragmented, inconsistently implemented, or weakly connected to evaluation findings. Evidence gathered during the site visit indicates only partial or superficial familiarity with the system. The involvement of research staff, especially early-career researchers, is uneven or minimal.
2	The institution demonstrates the existence of an internal system for ensuring quality, although it is still under development. Self-evaluation standards and procedures cover the main evaluation dimensions and relevant principles, but their depth, consistency, and practical use are only partly convincing. Personnel, committees, or working bodies are appointed, but there is weak or no evidence of appropriate representation, where relevant. Mechanisms for adopting and implementing actions based on self-evaluation and external evaluation recommendations exist, but follow-up, prioritisation, monitoring, and evidence of effectiveness are only partially substantiated. Procedures for defining strategic objectives and implementation plans are present or under development, but they remain separate from, or not yet fully integrated into, the quality system. During the site visit, interviewed

	research and support staff were aware of the system, but their participation appeared uneven, or the effectiveness of the process was not clear to them.
3	The institution demonstrates a solid internal quality assurance system or a strong commitment to implementing a well-structured, coherent, and realistic development plan for such a system. Evidence gathered during the site visit address the elements covered by the sub-criteria. The responsible bodies are, or are becoming, appropriately and inclusively composed, including representation of R1 and R2 researchers, where relevant. There is a clear connection between evaluation conclusions, external recommendations, and follow-up actions. The institution has recently adopted, or is developing, adequate procedures for defining strategic, long-term and development objectives and research implementation plans. The Self-Evaluation Report, together with interviews, reflects a commitment to strengthening the institutional quality culture.
4	The institution demonstrates a highly developed research quality culture and an advanced, integrated, and evidence-based internal system for ensuring the quality of research. Self-evaluation standards and procedures are comprehensive, systematic, and effectively applied. Personnel, committees, or working bodies responsible for self-evaluation are clearly mandated, competent, appropriately composed, and inclusive of R1 and R2 perspectives, where relevant. Weaknesses and opportunities are systematically identified, translated into well-prioritised actions, implemented, monitored, and improved in response to internal conclusions and external evaluation recommendations. Strategic, long-term and development objectives and strategy documents are defined through a coherent quality cycle that supports continuous institutional learning and improvement. The Self-Evaluation Report and evidence gathered during the site visit, including interviews, consistently confirm the maturity and effectiveness of this quality system.

6. Open science principles

Sub-criteria:

6.1: Appropriate internal policies and procedures to implement the principles of open science (e.g. rules, action plan, strategy).

6.2: An appropriate staffing structure for implementing the principles of open science (including, for example, a designated responsible person, data curator and data steward).

6.3: Appropriate actions or practices regarding open access to publications and other research outputs, such as the growth trend and percentage of open-access scientific publications and research data, as

well as data management, including research data management plans and research data management in accordance with FAIR principles.

6.4: Other appropriate actions and support for the implementation of open science, including science communication, citizen science, science popularisation, open methodologies, open peer review, and early and open exchange of research information.

Score	Reference description
0	No convincing evidence is provided that the institution has internal policies, procedures, staffing, actions, or support structures for implementing open science principles. Actions or strategies to support open publishing and access to publications or other research outputs, research data management, FAIR-related practices, and other open science actions are absent, unclear, or insufficiently documented. Findings from the site visit do not provide relevant evidence of institutional commitment to open science.
1	The institution provides limited evidence of implementation of open science principles. Policies or procedures are incomplete, mainly declarative, or weakly connected to institutional practice. Staffing responsibilities are unclear or insufficient. Open access, research data management, and FAIR-related practices are fragmented, inconsistently applied, or poorly monitored. Broader open science actions are occasional or weakly supported. Evidence gathered during the site visit provides only limited additional confirmation of the commitment to implement the principles of open science.
2	The institution demonstrates an adequate but uneven approach to open science. Internal policies, procedures, action plans, or strategies are present and generally appropriate, but implementation, monitoring, and institutional uptake are only partly convincing. Staffing structures for open science exist, although roles, responsibilities, or capacity may be limited. Open access practices and research data management, including FAIR-related principles, are developing, with some evidence of progress in promoting open-access publishing, research data management, or data management planning. Additional open science actions are present but not yet systematic across the institution. Interviews during the site visit indicate a certain level of commitment to open science, although this commitment is uneven and in some cases appeared mainly declarative.
3	The institution demonstrates a clear, coherent, and well-supported implementation of open science principles. Policies, procedures, action plans, or strategies are appropriately developed and connected to institutional practice. Staffing responsibilities, including relevant open science and research data management roles, are defined and functional. Publishing in open access platforms and open access to publications and other research

	outputs is actively supported and monitored, and research data management practices, including FAIR-oriented planning and support, are well established. Additional open science practices are meaningfully supported where relevant. Interviews reveal a strong commitment to transformations towards open science.
4	The institution demonstrates an excellent, integrated, and evidence-based open science framework as part of the institutional research culture. Policies, procedures, action plans, and strategic measures are comprehensive, systematically implemented, monitored, and improved. Staffing structures are clearly defined, competent, and sufficient, including effective responsibility for open science and research data management roles, such as data curator or data steward, where appropriate. Open access to publications and other research outputs shows strong and demonstrable progress, while research data management and FAIR-oriented practices are embedded in research workflows. The institution also provides compelling evidence of broader open science culture.

7. Principle of equal opportunities

Sub-criteria:

7.1: An appropriate strategy and actions to implement the principle of equal opportunities (e.g. a gender equality plan and its implementation).

7.2: An appropriate staffing structure for implementing the principle of equal opportunities (including, for example, a designated responsible person and a working group/committee).

Score	Reference description
0	No convincing evidence is provided that the institution has an appropriate strategy, actions, or implementation mechanisms for equal opportunities. A gender equality plan or comparable framework is absent, unclear, not implemented, or insufficiently documented, and there is no clear staffing structure, designated responsibility, working group, or committee to support implementation.
1	The institution provides limited evidence of commitment to equal opportunities. Strategy documents, actions, or a gender equality plan are mainly declarative, incomplete, weakly implemented, or poorly connected to institutional practice. Staffing responsibilities are unclear, insufficient, or informal, and any working group or committee has a limited mandate, visibility, continuity, or evidence of effective activity. There is weak evidence that equal opportunities are treated as a priority within the institutional research culture.
2	The institution demonstrates an adequate but uneven approach to equal opportunities. A strategy, gender equality plan, or comparable framework is present and generally

	appropriate, and some actions are being implemented, but monitoring, follow-up, institutional uptake, or evidence of practical effects is only partial. A designated responsible person, working group, or committee exists, but roles, resources, authority, or continuity may be limited or inconsistently evidenced. Findings from the site visit may support the assessment, but do not fully resolve the unevenness of the evidence.
3	The institution demonstrates a clear, coherent, and well-supported approach to equal opportunities. The strategy, gender equality plan, and related actions are appropriately developed, implemented, and connected to institutional policies and practices. Staffing responsibilities are clearly assigned, and a responsible person, working group, or committee has a defined role, sufficient visibility, and credible evidence of activity, follow-up, and contribution to implementation. Interviews indicate a genuine commitment to implementing actions that strengthen equal opportunities.
4	The institution demonstrates an excellent integration of the principle of equal opportunities into its institutional research culture. A structured framework for implementing equal opportunities is clearly established. The strategy, gender equality plan, and related actions are comprehensive, systematically implemented, monitored, evaluated, and improved, with strong evidence of institutional uptake and practical effects. Staffing and governance structures are clearly defined, appropriately resourced, and effective, including a designated responsible person, active working group or committee with a clear mandate, continuity, accountability, and demonstrable contribution to advancing equal opportunities across the institution. The assessment is coherently supported by interviews.

8. Ethics and integrity

Sub-criteria:

8.1: Appropriate internal policies or procedures to address research ethics and integrity (REI) systematically (e.g. assessment of research ethics, violation of REI principles, and appropriate sanctions).

8.2: Actions to safeguard REI (e.g. scientific rigour, disclosure of conflicts of interest, responsible protection of intellectual property rights, prevention of intellectual property theft, protection of whistleblowers).

8.3: Efforts to respect ethical aspects of publication (e.g. data authenticity, avoiding questionable journals or publishers).

Score	Reference description
0	No convincing evidence is provided that the institution has appropriate internal policies, procedures, actions, or publication-related safeguards for research ethics and integrity. Systematic assessment of research ethics, handling of violations, sanctions, safeguards for scientific rigour, conflicts of interest, intellectual property rights, prevention of intellectual property theft, whistleblower protection, data authenticity, and avoidance of questionable journals or publishers are absent, unclear, or insufficiently documented.
1	The institution provides limited evidence of a systematic approach to research ethics and integrity. Policies or procedures are mainly declarative, incomplete, weakly implemented, or poorly connected to institutional practice. Actions to safeguard aspects such as scientific rigour, manage conflicts of interest, protect intellectual property rights, prevent intellectual property theft, and protect whistleblowers are fragmented, informal, or weakly evidenced. Publication ethics practices, including assurance of data authenticity and avoidance of questionable journals or publishers, are occasional, uneven, or insufficiently monitored. Self-Evaluation Report and the findings during the visit indicate weak or no attention to the improvement.
2	The institution demonstrates an adequate but uneven approach to research ethics and integrity. Internal policies or procedures are present and generally appropriate, including processes for research ethics assessment, handling of violations of research ethics and integrity principles, and use of sanctions, but implementation, consistency, or monitoring is only partly convincing. Safeguards for aspects such as scientific rigour, conflict-of-interest disclosure, responsible protection of intellectual property rights, prevention of intellectual property theft, and whistleblower protection exist but vary in effectiveness or documentation. Publication ethics is addressed, including data authenticity and avoidance of questionable journals or publishers, but practices are not yet fully systematic across the institution. Commitment for improvement is modestly present in the self-evaluation practice.
3	The institution demonstrates a clear, coherent, and well-supported framework for research ethics and integrity. Internal policies and procedures are appropriately developed, implemented, and connected to institutional practice, including research ethics assessment, procedures for addressing violations, and proportionate sanctions. Actions to safeguard various aspects such as scientific rigour, disclose and manage conflicts of interest, protect intellectual property rights responsibly, prevent intellectual property theft, and protect whistleblowers are defined and credible. Ethical publication practices are actively promoted

	and monitored, including attention to data authenticity and avoidance of questionable journals or publishers. The Self-Evaluation Report reflects considerable efforts to improve the system and its practices.
4	Ethics and integrity are central elements of the institutional research culture. The institution has an excellent, integrated, and evidence-based system for research ethics and integrity. Policies and procedures are comprehensive, systematically implemented, monitored, evaluated, and improved, covering research ethics assessment, prevention and handling of violations of research ethics and integrity principles, and transparent and appropriate sanctions. Safeguards for various aspects of ethics and integrity are embedded in institutional practice and supported by clear responsibilities, guidance, and follow-up. Publication ethics is strongly and consistently safeguarded, with compelling evidence of practices that ensure data authenticity, responsible publication behaviour, and effective avoidance of questionable journals or publishers across the institution. The Self-Evaluation Report and evidence gathered during the site visit consistently confirm the maturity and effectiveness of this system.