



The Italian research evaluation and the international context

29 April 2026

Alessandra Celletti

Governing Board member

Coordinator of VQR 2020-2024



Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del
sistema Universitario e della Ricerca



National Agency for the Evaluation of
Universities and Research Institutes

VQR 2020-2024

VQR

- The first research evaluation was conducted by CIVR in 2007, known as VTR 2001–2003.
- VQR assessment exercises:
 - VQR 2004-2010 (VQR1) in 2011-2013,
 - VQR 2011-2014 (VQR2) in 2015-2017,
 - VQR 2015-2019 (VQR3) in 2020-2022, la
 - VQR 2020-2024 (VQR4) initiated by Ministerial Decree 1/8/2023.
- The evaluation concerns the institutions as a whole; it DOES NOT concern individual researchers.

ANVUR working group

- ANVUR Board: Proff. Antonio Uricchio (past-President); Alessandra Celletti (past-Vice-President, Board Member Research Evaluation Contact); Marilena Maniaci (Board Member AFAM and international activities contact); Massimo Tronci (Board Member Point of Contact for University Evaluations)
- General Director: Daniele Livon
- Research Evaluation Area Manager: Marco Malgarini
- Organizational Unit Officials VQR: Irene Mazzotta (Responsabile), Claudia Cicione, Maral Delghandi, Giulia Fioravanti, Girolamo Orestano, Sandra Romagnosi, Scipione Sarlo
- Administrative-accounting Area Manager : Valter Brancati
- Administrative and Accounting Department Officials: Lucia D'Andrea, Nicola Dell'Uomo D'Arme, Eleonora Evangelisti e Cristiano Trani
- CINECA working group

Institutions evaluated in VQR4

- State universities
- Special schools
- Private universities
- Public Research Institutions supervised by MUR
- Voluntary institutions.

What is evaluated in VQR4

- Scientific research outputs (increasing importance of Phds)
- Knowledge valorization (previously Third Mission)
- Research projects **NEW**
- Research infrastructure **NEW**

Evaluation experts (17 disciplinary groups + 2 interdisciplinary)

Area	Description	Evaluation Experts	Evaluation assistants
Area 1	Mathematics and Informatics	37	1
Area 2	Physics	53	2
Area 3	Chemistry	38	1
Area 4	Earth Science	26	1
Area 5	Biological Sciences	58	1
Area 6	Medical Sciences	89	2
Area 7	Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences	41	1
Area 8a	Architecture	20	1
Area 8b	Civic Engineering	21	1
Area 9	Industrial and Information Engineering	69	2
Area 10	Antiquities, Philology, Literary Studies, Art History	62	2
Area 11a	History, Philosophy, Pedagogy	36	1
Area 11b	Psychology	16	1
Area 12	Law	47	1
Area 13a	Economics and statistics	27	1
Area 13b	Economics and Management	25	1
Area 14	Social and Political Science	21	1
Knowledge valorization		7	2
Infrastructure		30	1
International competitive projects		-	1
TOTAL		723	25

VQR figures

	Researchers	Expected outputs	Actual outputs	Outputs per researcher
Stable researchers (1)	33.099	71.297	70.862	2,1
Hired or promoted researchers (2)	42.770	115.762	115.678	2,7
Total researchers (1_2)	75.869	187.059	186.540	2,4
Researchers having obtained a Phd in 2017-2023, including those not affiliated to participating institutions (3)	13.276	-	13.276	1,0
Total outputs			199.816	-

	Expected case studies	Actual case studies, projects and infrastructure
Case studies (4)	865	858
Competitive projects (5)	-	6.802, 6.493 of which were considered as acceptable on the basis of <i>art. 10, c. 1</i> of the VQR Call
Infrastructure	-	11

VQR figures

Number of Institutions: 132, of which:

100 Universities

13 Public Research Organizations supervised by MUR

19 Institutions participating on a voluntary basis

Overall number of experts collaborating to the evaluation:

719 disciplinary experts, 37 interdisciplinary experts, 27 evaluation assistants

6.740 peer reviewers

Objectives of the VQR

Quality and participation in research

Promote excellence in national research, encourage researchers' participation, and improve recruitment process and career progression.

Collaboration and social impact

Strengthen integration between research institutions, industries, schools, and civil society to maximize economic and social benefits.

Training and technology transfer

Improve the quality of doctoral education, enhance technology transfer activities, and support knowledge valorization.

Internationalization and funding

Increase international visibility and participation in European and international competitive funding.

Efficiency and infrastructure

Optimize spending capacity and enhance national research infrastructure.

Agencia Nazionale di Valutazione del
sistema Universitario e della Ricerca



National Agency for the Evaluation of
Universities and Research Institutes

Methodology

Evaluation methods



GEVs adopt the peer review methodology. When appropriate with respect to the characteristics of the Area, peer review informed by international citation indicators is adopted.

For each publication indexed in the main bibliometric databases (WoS, Scopus), ANVUR makes the following information available to GEVs:

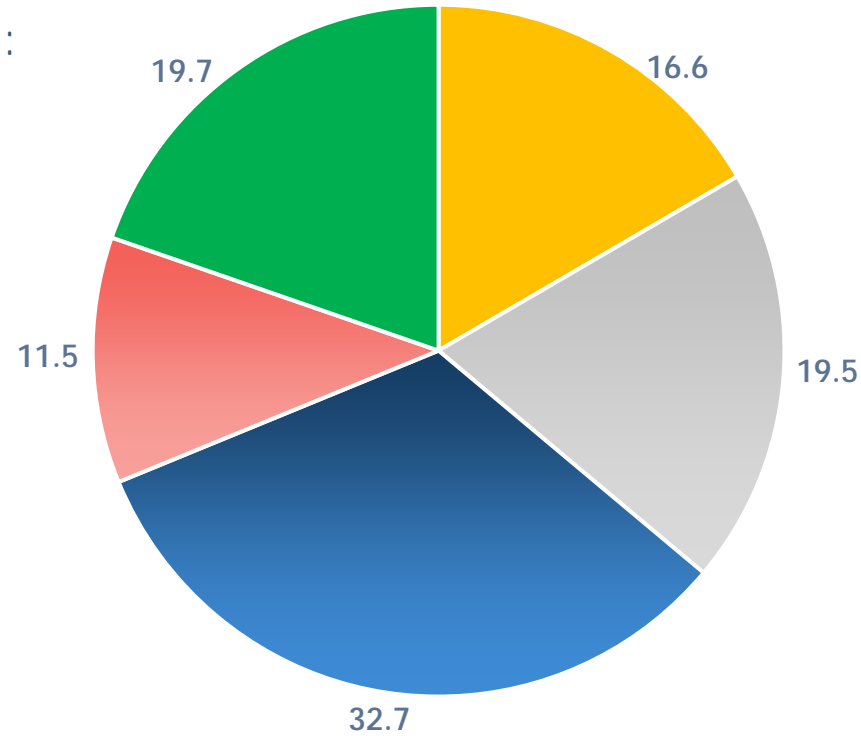
- The number of **citations** received at a specific date.
- The number of **self-citations**, that is, citations from the same author with whom the product being awarded is associated.
- The **impact indicators** of the publication site journal and related metrics (Citescore, SJR, SNIP, Impact Factor, IF5Y, AI).

Knowledge valorisation activities

- **Knowledge valorization:** the process through which economic and/or social value is generated from knowledge by connecting different areas and sectors and transforming data, technical skills, and research results into knowledge-based products, services, solutions, and sustainable policies that benefit society (Ministerial Decree, Art. 1, paragraph 3b).
- **Case studies** for the evaluation of knowledge valorization activities, whose impact is verifiable either partially or over the entire period, referring to the whole Institution, to individual Departments, or to groups of Departments.

Case studies distribution

Case studies = **858**, of which:
 357 only one thematic area
 297 two thematic areas
 204 three thematic areas



Technology transfer

Production and management of public goods

Public engagement

Life and health sciences

Environmental sustainability, inclusion and combating inequality, with particular reference to the objectives of the ONU Agenda 2030

International competitive projects

- **Projects** successfully awarded and activated within 2020–2024, for which the PI or local coordinator is a researcher affiliated with the Institution as of 1/11/2024.
- Requirements:
 - minimum amount for the submitting Institution of €50,000;
 - funded by non-national or non-local public or private bodies (European Commission, United Nations, WHO, ESA, NASA, NIH, etc.);
 - awarded on an international competitive basis, through peer review.
- The size of competitive projects is evaluated on their financial scale and in relation to the reference Area (disciplinary sector) of the project's principal investigator.
- For multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary projects, the project will be attributed 70% to the Area of the main PI and 30% to the Area of the secondary PI.

Research infrastructure

- **Research infrastructure**, facilities—also distributed—within the European Union (including those located in Italy), EFTA countries, and the United Kingdom, as well as the resources and services connected to them.
- These infrastructure are characterized by:
 - Open access to the scientific community and other users for conducting high-quality research in their respective fields;
 - priority of access based on the quality of proposals, evaluated by the governing bodies of the infrastructure.

Merit classes of research outputs and project evaluation

Evaluation criteria of the submitted research products:

- originality,
- methodology,
- impact.

Each scientific output, case study and infrastructure is assigned to a class of merit with related score:

<i>a) Exceptional (ExC)</i>	<i>Score 1</i>
<i>b) Excellent (EC)</i>	<i>Score 0.8</i>
<i>c) Standard (ST)</i>	<i>Score 0.5</i>
<i>d) Sufficient (SUF)</i>	<i>Score 0.2</i>
<i>e) Marginal relevance or not acceptable (SR)</i>	<i>Score 0</i>

Agencia Nazionale di Valutazione del
sistema Universitario e della Ricerca



National Agency for the Evaluation of
Universities and Research Institutes

The international context and good practices

The international debate on research evaluation reform

- **Since the 1990s**, many countries have developed funding systems for higher education institutions based on the evaluation of academic performance (performance-based research funding systems, see Hicks, 2012).
- In recent years, the methodologies used in these evaluation processes have been at the center of an intense international debate; see, for example:
 - **The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment** on proper use of bibliometric indicators in evaluation processes (<https://sfdora.org/read>).
 - **Leiden Manifesto** on research metrics (<http://www.leidenmanifesto.org/>)
 - The Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment, promoted by Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (**Coara**, <https://coara.eu/>)

The international debate on research evaluation reform

- **CoARA has established 10 general principles** underpinning the reform of the research assessment process:
 1. Recognize the diversity of research contributions in line with the needs and nature of research
 2. **Base evaluation exercises on peer review, supported by the responsible use of metrics**
 3. Abandon the inappropriate use of journal-based indicators, in particular the Impact Factor
 4. Avoid the use of institutional rankings in evaluation processes
 5. Invest resources in reforming evaluation systems

The international debate on research evaluation reform

6. Regularly review evaluation criteria, tools, and processes
7. Increase awareness and transparency of evaluation processes
8. Share practices and experiences within the Coalition
9. Communicate progress achieved in line with the Principles and commitments set out in the Coalition Agreement
10. Assess evaluation criteria in light of the most recent debates within the research community, promoting the availability of open data on the evaluation carried out

Enhancing ANVUR's Participation in International Organizations and Scientific Debate



CoARA – ANVUR was among the first signatories of the CoARA Commitment.

ENQA WG on QA of Research – ANVUR is one of 14 agencies involved in the ENQA Working Group on Quality Assurance in Research, which aims to explore the state of the art in the quality assurance of research processes.

AGORRA – ANVUR participates in the activities of the AGORRA Consortium – A Global Observatory of Responsible Research Assessment (<https://researchonresearch.org/project/agorra/>).

- In the VQR4 assessment process, the role of peer review was strengthened: the use of multiple international citation indices does not require their consolidation into a single interpretation code.
- Citation indicators cannot replace a thorough evaluation of the research product's merits, nor can they automatically assign the product to one of the classes of merit.
- The evaluation of GEVs is based uniquely on the quality of the product and is independent of the type of product submitted or the language in which the product is written.

- The assessment took the number of self-citations into serious consideration.
- Potential cases of plagiarism have been carefully considered.
- Unlike past VQR exercises, the methodological criterion has been defined to encourage evaluators to pay attention not only to the rigour of logical steps, but also to certain aspects such as reproducibility, transparency, accessibility, and the reuse of data (whether used) in the publications.
- Definition of the new methodological criterion:
 - “[...] understood as the ability of the work to clearly present the research objectives and their scientific value, the literature used, and the results obtained. While also promoting, where applicable, the **reproducibility** of the results, **transparency** about the methods and procedures adopted, and **access to the data** used. This approach aims to enhance the entire process that led to the realization of the research output.”

Good practices

- The institutions were required to indicate at the time of submission whether the publications were open access and to provide the link to the documents (at the time of submission or later, but in any case, by the end of the assessment exercise).
- To ensure full transparency, at the end of the assessment exercise the Agency publishes the complete list of metadata of the evaluated products on its website, by also making available the link to the open access, whenever possible.
- One of the fields of action under “Knowledge valorization” includes “actions for the development of Open Science”.

Agencia Nazionale di Valutazione del
sistema Universitario e della Ricerca



National Agency for the Evaluation of
Universities and Research Institutes

Conclusions

Conclusions

- **The VQR provides an overall picture of research performed in our country** which, as already noted in VQR3, places strong emphasis on quality in the promotion and recruitment of young researchers.
- **The evaluation of Knowledge valorization activities** has shown that institutions are engaged in a wide range of activities, covering multiple thematic areas and fields of action.
- **Institutional participation in the evaluation of research projects** has been very broad, making it possible to obtain a meaningful overview of internationally competitive projects.
- **The evaluation exercise on research infrastructure** has made it possible to effectively test the methodology and evaluation criteria, which can be applied more systematically in future evaluation exercises.
- With regard to **peer review**, both pure and informed, analyze the evaluation approaches used in **STEM+LS and HSS areas**, also with the aim of limiting possible differences in final evaluation outcomes.

On-line documents

<https://www.anvur.it/attivita/vqr/vqr-2015-2019/>

- Regulatory references and ANVUR documents
- Presentations
- GEV documents
- ANVUR final report
- Area reports
- Institutions' reports
- ANVUR critical analysis report on VQR3
- Critical analysis report on VQR3 from international experts

<https://www.anvur.it/attivita/vqr/vqr-2020-2024/>

- Ministerial Decree 998/2023
- Public call VQR 2020-2024

On-line documents

<https://www.anvur.it/attivita/vqr/vqr-2015-2019/>

- Regulatory references and ANVUR documents
- Presentations
- GEV documents
- ANVUR final report
- Area reports
- Institutions' reports
- ANVUR critical analysis report on VQR3
- Critical analysis report on VQR3 from international experts

<https://www.anvur.it/attivita/vqr/vqr-2020-2024/>

- Ministerial Decree 998/2023
- Public call VQR 2020-2024



Thank you for your attention

