Berlin Institute of Health at Charité

From Theory to Practice:
Implementing Context-Sensitive Research Assessment Reforms

"The Many Faces of Research Assessment" - Università di Bologna

26.6.2026, Dr. med. Miriam Kip

Research Assessment Reform Initiatives

DFG
Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
Positionspapier 2022

SCIENCE EUROPE
eua EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION
with the support of
European Commission

Stakeholder Assembly Consultation
Survey Results & Process Update

2nd Stakeholder Assembly
19 MAY 2022

§ 41 BerlHG (2021)
Forschungsberichte

CoARA

Brussels, 10 June 2022
(OR. en)

Council of the
European Union

DORA

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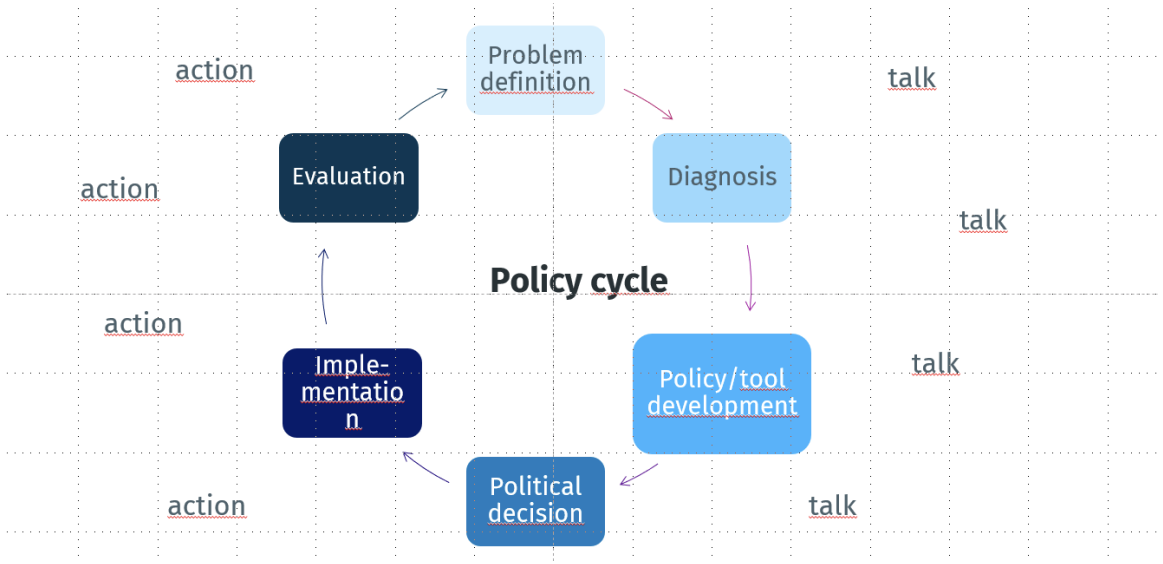
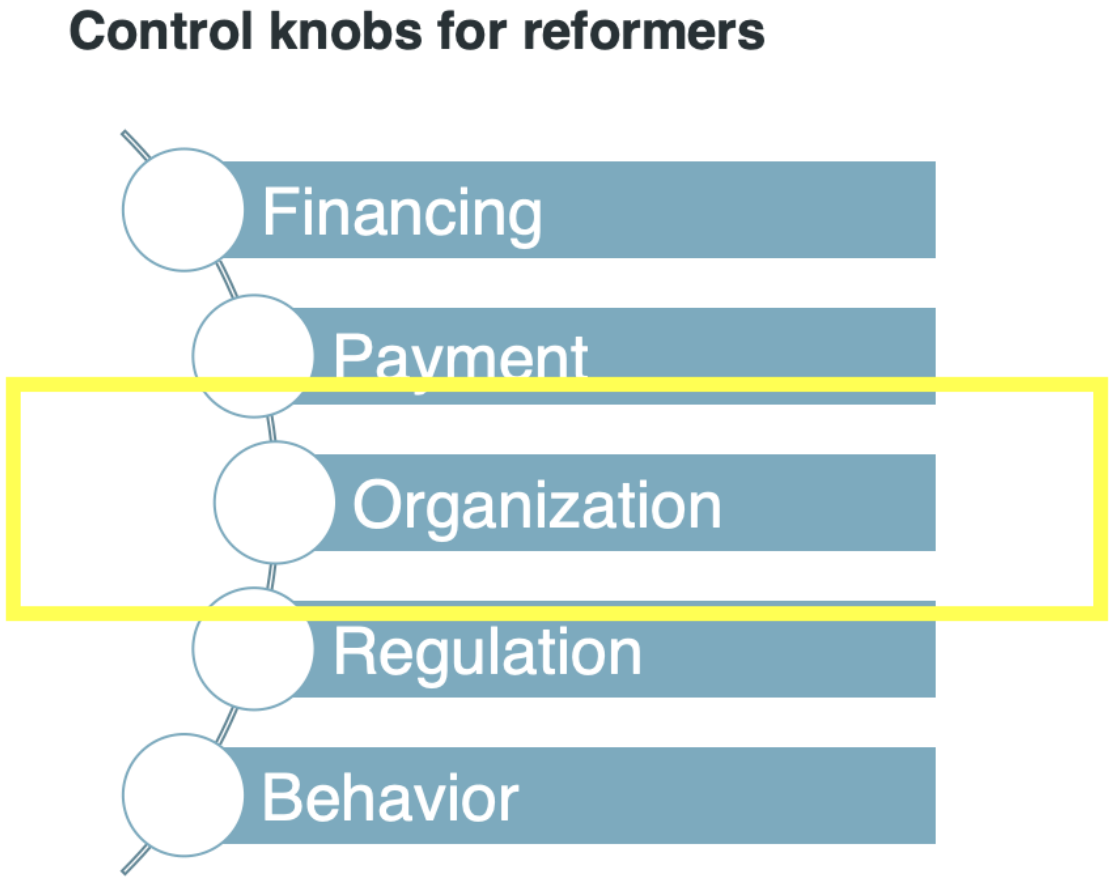
But How Does Reform Work?





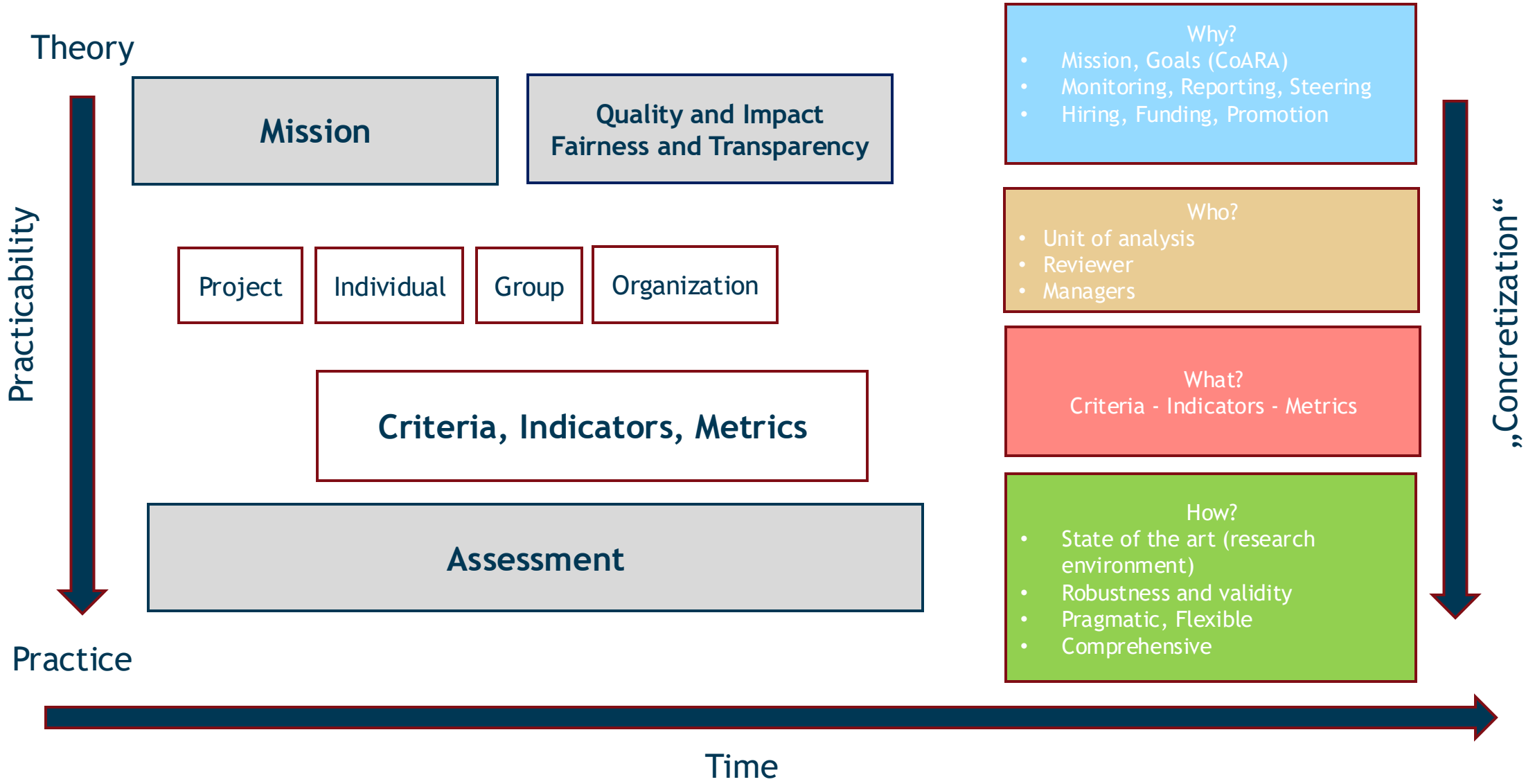
Roberts, Marc, and others, Getting Health Reform Right: A Guide to Improving Performance and Equity (New York, 2008; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Sept. 2009), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195371505.001.0001, accessed 12 Nov. 2024. Hudson, B., et al. (2019). "Policy failure and the policy-implementation gap: can policy support programs help?" Policy Design and Practice 2(1): 1-14.

Barriers to Reform

Structural & Institutional Barriers	Implementation & Governance Barriers
Political resistance from entrenched interest groups	Policy implementation gap: implementers lack resources, incentives, or clarity
Institutional capacity constraints: weak admin systems, scarce data, limited expertise	Overly technocratic designs that ignore cultural and organizational realities
Fragmentation of governance with overlapping responsibilities	Absence of robust feedback mechanisms
Resource limitations and misaligned incentives	Short-term political cycles discouraging long-term structural investment
Narrow metrics misaligned with policy priorities	Low stakeholder ownership without frontline engagement
Failure to address equity	Complexity producing unintended reform outcomes

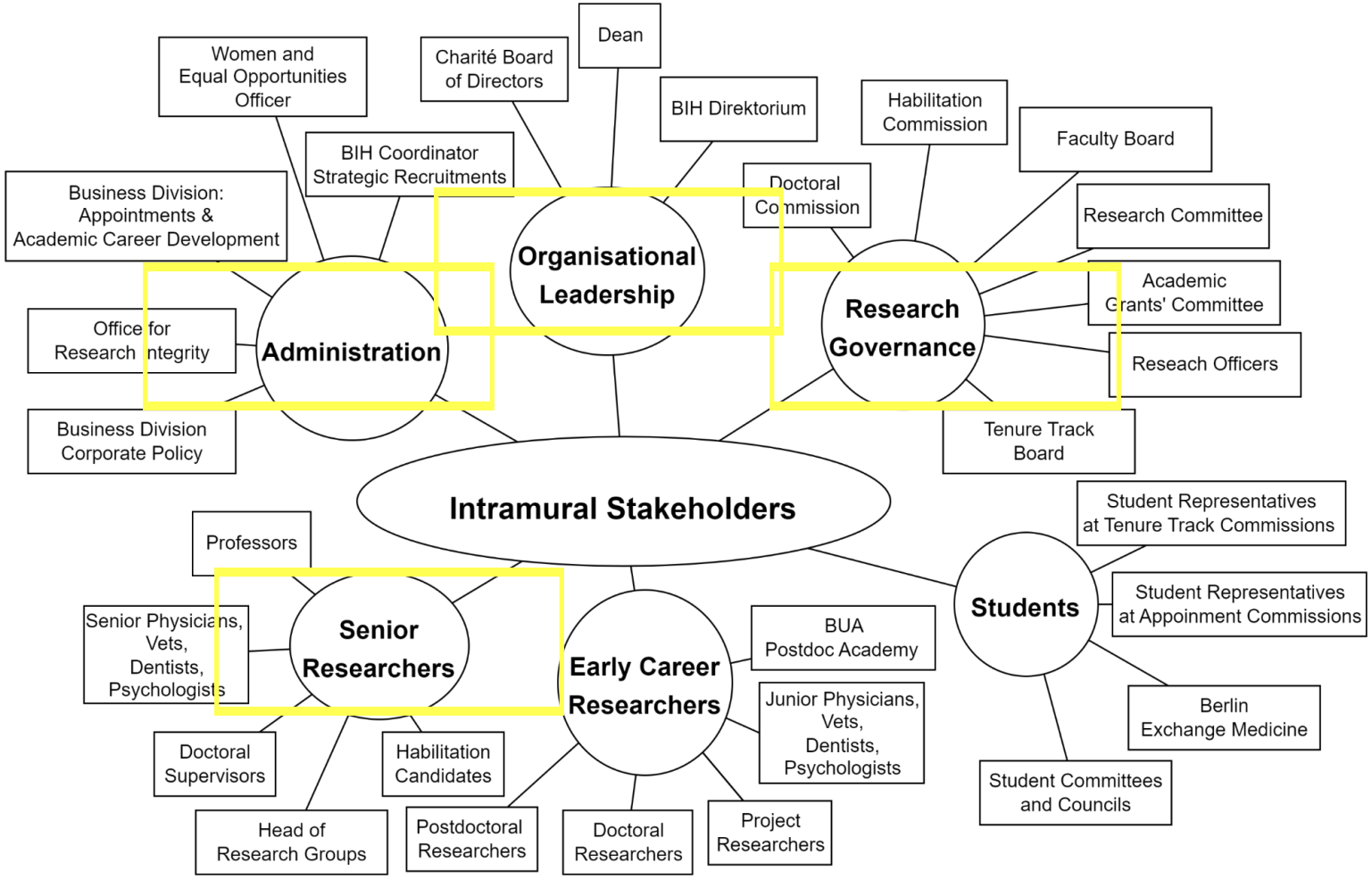
Hudson, B., et al. (2019). "Policy failure and the policy-implementation gap: can policy support programs help?" Policy Design and Practice 2(1): 1-14.

Framework for Context-Sensitive Research Assessments



Source: Carolyn Capelouto, Sebastian Major, Miriam Kip. "MERIT: a Knowledge-Based Infrastructure for Responsible Research Assessment" (in development)

Who? Identifying the relevant Stakeholders



What and How?
The Stakeholders Perspective of the Status Quo

Research environment: Professorial Appointments

Sample: 32 semi- structured interviews with 35 decision-makers from 4 Berlin Universities (BUA - Freie Universität, Humboldt Universität, Technische Universität, Charité Universitätsmedizin)

Deans, Heads of Recruitement Offices, Legal Advisors, Strategy Departments, Equal Opportunitiy Officers, Senior Researchers

The sample does not include students or ECR

Criteria	Number of interviews mentioned (n)
Publication record	30
Acquisition of third-party funding	27
Breadth and depth of research	20
Independence and innovation of the approach	17
Teaching portfolio and experience	17
Vision and plans for the professorship	15
Academic age and career stage	14
Visibility within the (international) academic community	13
Leadership qualities and support for early-career researchers	12
Gender equality and diversity aspects	12
Alignment with the position profile or disciplinary culture	10
Periods of chilld-rearing and caregiving	6
Societal impact and translational output	5
Patents and industry partnerships	5
Patient care/ alignment with clinical operations	4

Müller, A., Lengauer, M., Hempel, F., Schulz, R., & Kip, M. J., Dr. (2026, June 8). Deliverable 3.3.0: Interview Analysebericht. https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/H7D32

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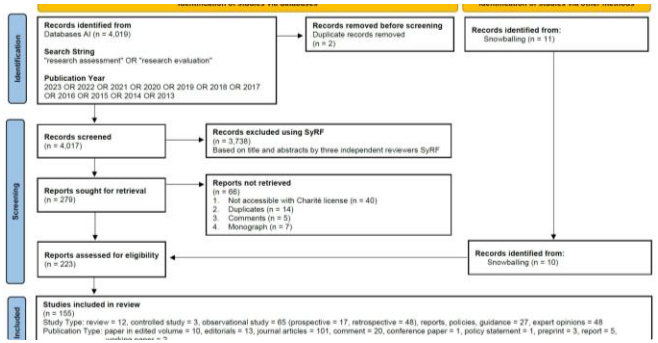
What and How? Scoping Review

to systematically gather evidence on current recommendations and/or research on suitable indicators for RA, their objectives and limitations on the level of the individual researcher

Sample N= 4019 identified datasets (tabs), N= 225 fulltexts, n= 157 included sources



Study Type	n	%
Reviews	14	8,9 %
Controlled Studies	2	1,3 %
Observational Studies	61	38,9 %
Reports/Policies/Recommendations	27	17,2 %
Expert opinions	53	33,8 %

Study Findings

Disciplinary Specificity: Recommendations were predominantly formulated in an interdisciplinary manner

Recommended Criteria

- Quality and scholarly contribution rather than quantity
- Recognition of diverse roles (mentoring, teaching, service, collaboration)
- Narrative evidence on impact and context
- Goal-oriented, multidimensional criteria

Rejected criteria

- Quantity-based criteria (number of publications as an end in itself)
- Prestige proxies (e.g., journal ranking as a suitability criterion)
- Criteria that reinforce biases or penalize diversity

Hempel, F., Jachan, D., Capelouto, C. R., & Kip, M. J., Dr. (2026, June 8). Deliverable 1.1.0: Scoping Review. https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/37ZQW

What and How? Strength and Weaknesses

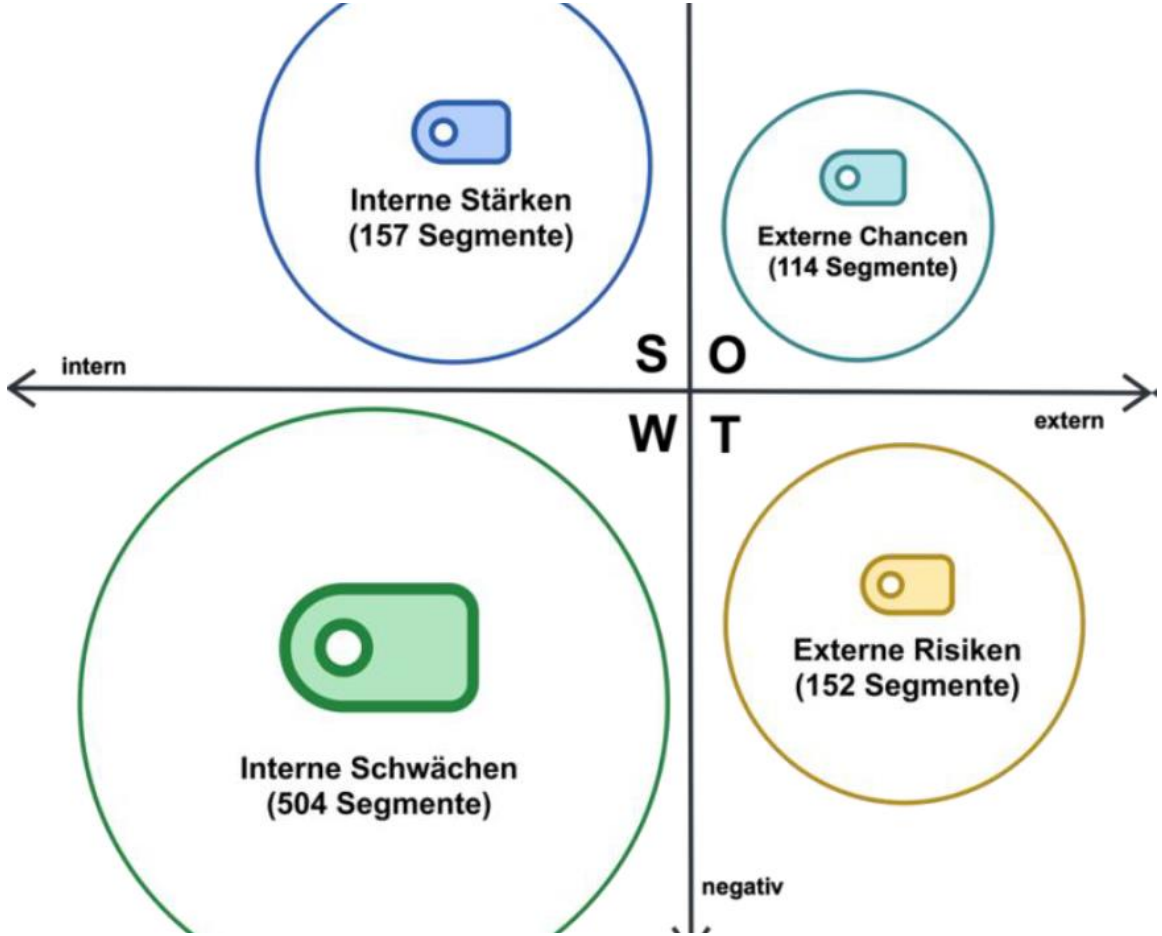
Stakeholder Perspectives at the 4 Berlin Universities (BUA) (interview study) on the current research assessment system for professorial appointments

Strengths
Diligence and good intentions
Institutional commitment to objectivity
Flexibility and professional autonomy
Professional support throughout the process

Weaknesses
Application of assessment criteria
Interpersonal bias
Institutional structures

Opportunities
Involvement of external experts
Structural reforms through regulatory adjustments
Digitalization (application portals and digital assessment tools)

Risks
Legal and institutional framework
Lawsuits by competitors
Loss of significance in global competition



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Comparison of Existing Application Portals with the Current State of the Reform Debate in Berlin

at the 4 Berlin Universities (Preliminary results). Problem: restricted access to commercial application portals

Research Quality:

Reproducibility, methodological transparency, and open peer review are rarely asked for explicitly; preregistration and negative results are absent at 3 out of 4 institutions.

Diversity of Outputs:

Datasets, software, guidelines, and policies are missing as distinct output categories at all 4 institutions.

Academic Development & Mentoring:

Supervision, peer review, and editorial roles are recorded largely unstructured.

Societal Impact:

Science communication, policy advising, and civic engagement are absent as explicit categories at 3/4 institutions.

Career Contextualization:

Career breaks due to illness, parenthood, or caregiving are systematically accounted for at only 1/4 institutions

Jachan, D., & Kip, M. J., Dr. (2026, June 8). Deliverable 2.2.0: Status Quo der Bewertungskriterien. https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/5BWDS

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Legal Context (Appointments in the State of Berlin)

Document Analysis

Legal framework

Law permits qualitative criteria, open science, seniority contextualization, digital portals, and subject-specific differentiation. It prohibits retroactive criteria changes, irrelevant characteristics (e.g. age), and lack of documentation. Constitutional requirement: academic community participation is mandatory.

Court cases 2015-2024 (n = 15, Berlin)

No lawsuit has successfully challenged a substantive evaluation decision. Cases concern almost exclusively procedural errors. Two key rulings: A on inconsistent publication assessment (2019) and B on impermissible use of age as a criterion (2023).

Kip, M. J., Dr., & Hempel, F. (2026, June 8). Deliverable 2.2.1: Rechtsgrundlagen. https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/4HJ3G

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Reform Strategy - Considerations

Central (in Berlin case: Alliance of 4 Universities BUA)	Decentral (University, Faculty)	Criticism of "Blueprints"
• Efficiency through resource sharing • Consistency in joint procedures • Strengthening BUA Goals	• Local legitimacy and acceptance • Institutional profile maintained • Local actors enable real change	• CoARA is context-blind • Recommendations abstract from discipline, law, culture, etc.
Risk: Implementation gap, Decisions lacking local grounding, Goal shifting	Risk: Reform fatigue and lack of resources	Risk: Metric substitution instead of genuine quality assessment

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Open Science at 4 Berlin Universities

- Virtually absent as an evaluation dimension; appears only as a marginal issue
- 4 mentions from 3 Decision-makers at 1 instituion

"[…] but that we should make it a little more elaborate now and a little more modern, because new forms of scientific activity have emerged that haven't been covered at all so far, like Open Science or something like that." (i2)

"[…] if they were to write a short abstract about what's important to them or their contribution to Open Science or something like that—something a bit shorter but that reveals a little more about the person and what they're planning to do—in other words, shifting the focus a bit to 'What am I planning to do?' and looking not just at the record but also at the potential—that helps, too." (i2)

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Implications for a Implementation Strategy

- Reform as a continuous, decentralized negotiation process
- Sagefuarding institutional autonomy
- Based on interdicsiplinary relevant dimensions of knowledge production e.g. Diversity, Robustness, Practical Impact, Team Sciences, Open Sciences
- --> from which shared criteria and indicators can be derived, but don`t have to be
- FIRST OPERATIONALIZE THEN MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS for IMPLEMENTATION

Key areas of action:

- Expanding knowledge among decision-makers regarding e.g. Open Science, Teams Sciences etc..
- Decentralized development of context-sensitive, discipline-appropriate criteria and procedures
- Include the local actors/decision-makers
- Introduction and revision of exisiting application portals, addressing potential vendor lock-in problem with commercial application tools

Local Excercise at BIH at Charité:
MERIT BIH Groups - Assessment Dimensions and Criteria

Based on: Stakeholder meetings (BIH Indicators Group), MERIT Portal for Appointments, Literature

Dimension	Individual Group Member Report	Group Level Report
Fit to BIH Mission	Scientific Profile, Top Research Contributions, Own Contribution to Projects	Mission Area most aligned with, Group Scientific Profile, Ongoing Projects (incl. Clinical Trials and COVID Projects), Group Top Research Contributions
Quality	Top Research Contributions, Open Science, Strategies for reducing risk of bias	Top Research Contributions, Open Science, 3R, SABV and gender considerations in research
Impact Potential	Contribution to Team Science, Patient-Stakeholder Engagement, Open Science	Team Science, Patient-Stakeholder Engagement, Open Science, Public-Private Partnerships
Productivity	Third-Party Funding, Publications	Third-Party Funding, Publication List
Knowledge Valorization	Contribution to Transfer and Innovations, Science Communication, Memberships in Political Committees	Transfer and Innovations, Science Communication, Memberships in Political Committees
Rewards	Academic Distinctions and Recognition	Academic Distinctions and Recognition
Teaching	Teaching Activities	Teaching Activities
Research Culture	Professional Trainings, Participation in Academic Self-Administration (Leadership Experience, Mentoring)	Leadership Experience, DEIB Mentoring/Promotion of Young Talent, Professional Trainings, Participation in Academic Self-Administration

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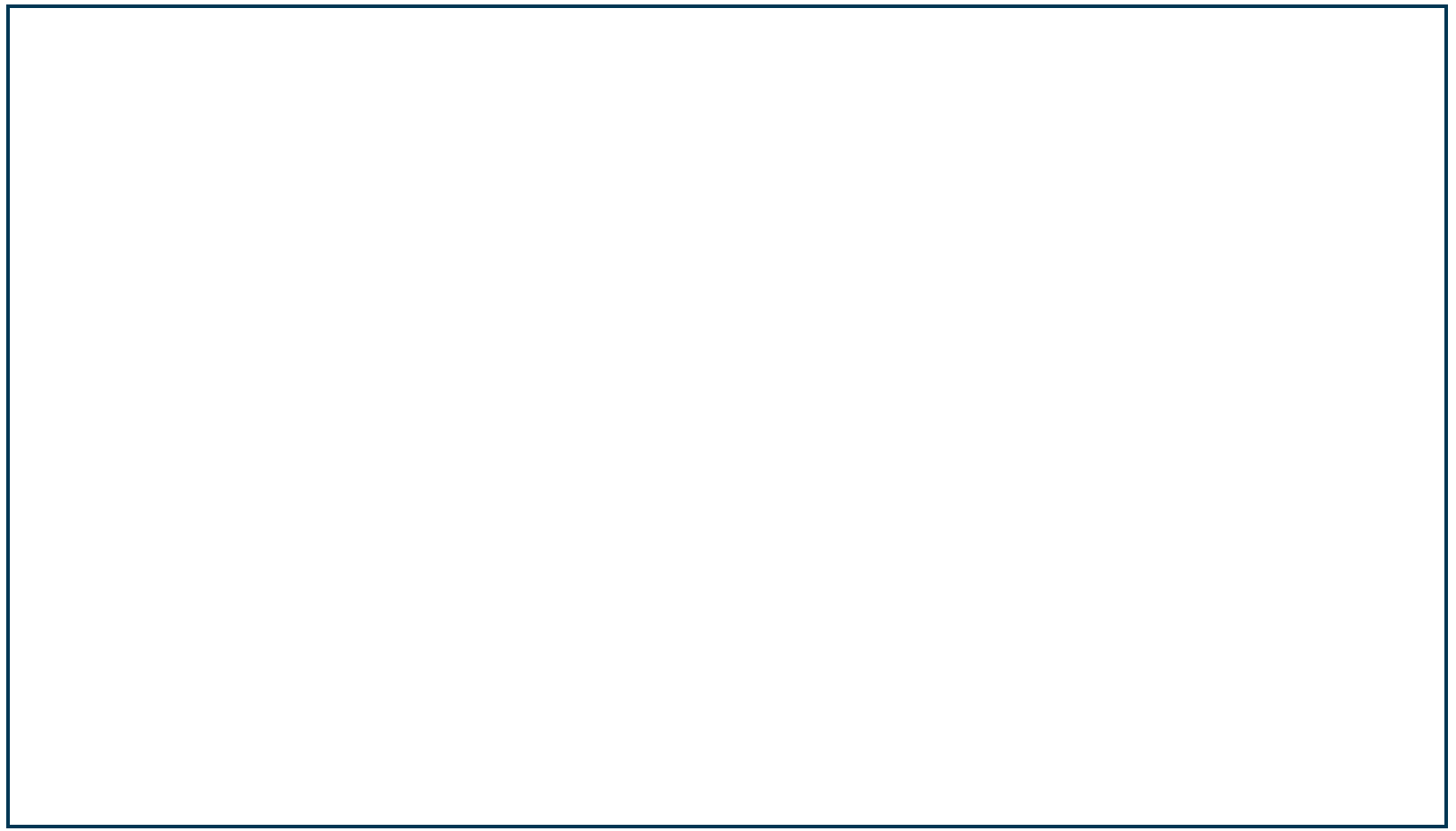
Requirements

- Not all criteria are equally relevant to all research groups and research group members
- Selection of 3 most important dimensions
- Opt Out options
- Productivity is more relevant on the group level and senior level
- Reputation metrics are not applied at all

MERIT Video



https://canva.link/bi0b2jyy2sifni0

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