

European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers

Internal Gap Analysis and Action Plan (2015-2016) to support the Implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers at the University of Barcelona

Background information

On March 5, 2013, the Universitat de Barcelona (UB), member of the League of European Research Universities (LERU), signed the 'European Charter for Researchers' (the 'Charter') and the 'Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers' (the 'Code'), thereby emphasising its commitment and determination to support the European Commission initiative, with a view to promote and improve the recruitment, the working conditions and the careers of researchers while concomitantly contributing to the development of the European Research Area.

Strategy and Implementation

The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers – HRS4R has 5 steps:

1. HR Policy Institution Internal Analysis in relation to the Charter and Code principles
2. Publication of the Strategy/Action Plan
3. European Commission (EC) approval and Excellence Logo concession
4. Strategy Implementation and Self- evaluation (at least every two years)
5. External evaluation (at least every four years)

Following the recommendations of the European Commission, and in order to define its 'Human Resources Strategy for Researchers' ('HRS4R'), **an internal UB Work Group** was formed to carry out the Internal Analysis (step 1 of the Strategy) in terms of assessing the compliance to autonomic, national and European legislation. This internal working group was set up in **April 2013** as a joint initiative from the Vice-Rectorate for Research, Innovation and Transfer and the Direction of the Area of Research Management. This group consisted of:

- the Rector's Delegate for Strategic Research Actions
- the Director of the Area of Research Management
- A Senior UB Researcher
- A Research support technician

The **Internal WG** worked in closed collaboration with the UB Responsibles of the following UB Units/Offices:

- Technical Bureau at the Rector's Office (GTR: Gabinet Tècnic de Rectorat)
- UB Office of Research Management (OGR: Oficina de Gestió de la Recerca)
- UB Office for International Research Projects (OPIR: Oficina de Projectes Int. de Recerca)
- UB Unit for Academic Staff

Prior to this analysis, a survey aimed to a large number of UB researchers was carried out to evaluate the current institutional procedures, in view of the 40 articles of the 'Charter' and the 'Code'. This Internal Analysis has been based in the template proposed by the European Commission: (<http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/index>). See the attached document 01-HR Strategy UB.

The analysis showed that most of the principles put forward in the 'Charter' and the 'Code' have already been largely put into practice within the UB. However, the UB has also identified a number of aspects for which there is room for improvement, and has also produced an Action Plan to reduce the detected gaps.

Gap Analysis Process: The Survey

A questionnaire addressed to UB researchers was sent by email **on July 9, 2014**. It was anonymously answered **till July 16, 2013** and it allowed us both to gauge the current state of the UB regarding the HRS4R principles and detect the strengths and weaknesses of our Institution. A summary of the **Survey results** is attached below (**Annexes I and IIA, IIB and IIC**).

The Survey was performed online. It was sent to 530 UB Researchers from 106 UB Departments of all 19 UB Faculties. The sample was a representative selection of the overall Teaching and Research Staff of the UB and it included: Full Professors, Tenured lecturers, Associate Professors, Lecturers and Ramón y Cajal Researchers (see the attached Annex I for the detailed composition of the Survey's sample). The overall participation rate was 25.66%.

The questions that made up the **Survey** were **based on 20 out of the 40 parameters** that the European Commission suggests to be considered in order to perform the institutional internal analysis (<http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/index>). These 20 topics were chosen by the Internal Working Group for being considered important, relevant and with a reasonable potential for improvement, according to the existing institutional rules and practices. See the attached document 01-HR Strategy UB.

The **results of the survey** highlighted 11 aspects with together with the compliance of the autonomic, national and European legislation had been taken into account to produce an **Action Plan** to reduce the gaps detected in the UB procedures regarding the professional welfare of its employees, the acquirement of better skills and competences, and the development of their career in agreement to the HRS4R recommendations (see below).

According to the results of the survey and our internal analysis, **the Action Plan will be implemented in the near future (2015-2016), so that in a sensible timeline, between 2-3 years (i.e. by 2017), a considerable improvement in the issues that the UB has to address should be observed.**

The different Vice-rectorates, Units and Offices of the University of Barcelona involved in the implementation of the HR Strategy, have already started working in the setting up of the priority actions which are described in the Table below. Some of the Actions have a reasonable background from which we are building the corresponding working protocols and documents. This means that they will be fully developed either by the end of 2015 or in the course of 2016. However, there are some Actions that require more work, as in the case of some procedures scheduled for the aspects nr 8, 23, 28 and 39. In order to fully accomplish these aspects, a harder implication and a longer working frame will be necessary which brings us go well till the end of 2016 to see the first results.

As conclusion, all the measures and improvements listed in the Action Plan will be set up and in progress throughout the years 2015-2016 being our primary objective to have all of them completely in force in 2017. As we understand the whole process of the implementation of the HR Strategy, the University of Barcelona commits itself not only to act specifically to solve the 11 aspects described in the Action Plan, in order to overcome the deficiencies that have been detected, but also to have in place the internal revision protocols that are necessary to guarantee that all these HR policies will have been effectively translated into best practices in the next 3 years (2015 – 2017). We expect to have these practices embedded in our daily-based tasks in a way that we can make the regular follow-up revisions and be prepared to succeed in 2017 when the Step 4 of the HR Strategy (self-assessment) should be done.

Universitat de Barcelona
Barcelona, April 24th, 2015

| Aspect nr | Actions | Who | Specific Units/Offices involved | When |
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| 5. Contractual and legal obligations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1.- Define the content and prepare an introductory welcoming letter pointing out the corresponding relevant legislation and the existing institutional rules, their references and the links to find the complete texts. This information could be handed (as a leaflet) to the researchers at the moment of signing their contracts at the UB. The letter will include also the corresponding references to issues related to Aspects nr 6, 7 and 8. - 2.-The documents should be available in the website for internal use (in CAT/ESP/ENG) - 3.-Alternatively, a short course (half a day) could be given by qualified personnel, outlining the main obligations of any UB research employee. | <p>The Vice-Rectorate in charge of Science Policy and the Vice-Rectorate responsible for Academic Policy and Quality should study how to best implement the access of the existing information and regulations to the researchers and academic staff at the UB.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic Staff Unit (PDI-Laboral and Funcionari) - Student Services and Programs Unit (Beques UB) - OSSMA | <p>March – April 2015</p> |
| 6. Accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1.-The inclusion of the references given at the legislative and institutional levels in the documents that researchers receive when they sign up their contracts at the UB, in order to make them more aware of the accountability duties they must observe: on the time dedicated to the institution (UB), on the accountability of the expenses of their research budgets, and on the expected return to the society (scientific divulgation, patents, research transference, knowledge transmission...). Upon reception, researchers should sign as having received this information. - 2.-The informative documents should be available in the web for internal use - 3.-A short introductory course (half a day) given by qualified personnel should outline the compliance of UB researchers to transparency and accountability. | <p>The Vice-Rectorate in charge of Research, together with the concerned Faculties,</p> <p>Research inputs and outputs will be evaluated at the Research Management Office (OGR) and Vice-Rectorate responsible for Research, at least yearly.</p> <p>The input/output values will be used for adjusting the budget and the academic staff allotted to each department and faculty.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OGR - GREC (as UB Research Information System) + PDA (as the Plan for the assessment and evaluation of the UB Academic Staff) - FBG - Entorns Web (ie. Web Services) | <p>March – April 2015</p> |
| 7. Good practice in research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1.- Distribution among researchers (or reminder, depending on the case) of: ** the Code of Good Research Practices at the University of Barcelona (1st edition 2010): http://www.ub.edu/agenciaqualitat/doc/codibonespractiques.pdf ** the reminder of the useful links at the OSSMA webpage: http://www.ub.edu/ossma -2.- To work ahead on the full definition, completion and implementation of the UB Welcoming/Integration Plan for new staff-researchers (<i>Pla d'Acollida</i>) | <p>The Vice-Rectorate in charge of Academic Policy and Quality, the Vice-Rectorate responsible for Administration and Organization affairs, and the OSSMA should work together hand in hand to provide this information.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OSSMA in collaboration with the Academic Staff Unit | <p>May 2015</p> |

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| <p>8. Dissemination, exploitation of results (*)</p> | <p>Actions to be undertaken to improve Dissemination and exploitation of results</p> <p>1.- Any new research and academic staff should follow a short course introducing them to the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access and use of the research news webpage to communicate relevant research results - access to the Fundació Bosch i Gimpera (FBG) for guidance in establishing contracts with companies, writing and submitting patents, founding spin-offs - information about the UB program to subsidize partially or totally the publication in Open Access journals. - the UB should encourage its staff (by partial payment or facilitating its mobility) to complement its training with adequate masters, or attending to internal or external specific short courses to address all these issues. <p>2.- These training activities may be part of the Institutional Training Plan which is being designed under the guidance of the Vice-Rectorate of Academic Policy.</p> | <p>The Vice-Rectorates in charge of Research, Transfer, Innovation and Science Policies, the Vice-Rectorates in charge of Academic Policy and Quality and the Vice-Rectorate responsible for Communication and the FBG.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The mentioned Vice-Rectorates will continue fostering dissemination activities through the website, fairs, exhibitions, etc. - The Academic Staff Unit will include a reference to these resources (FBG, specific Calls whenever available) in the welcoming letter (see above) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - March - April 2015 - Academic year 2015/2016 (starting in September 2015) |
| <p>13. Recruitment (Code) (*)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1.-To update, complete and add the English version of the information at the Research webpage of the UB at its site of "Work and grants": http://www.ub.edu/web/ub/en/recerca_innovacio/ofertes_treball/treball_beques.html - 2.-To publish at the EURAXESS portal all those UB Offers intended for researcher staff (http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/jobs/latestJobs) - 3.- To make the adequate Evaluation Committees or Tribunals in order to select the best candidates, based on their CV as well as on the added value to the Scientific Strategic Plan, and thus to promote excellence at all levels in the UB. | <p>The Vice-Rectorates in charge of Research and Science Policy and the Vice-Rectorate responsible for Teaching Staff should work together.</p> <p>In this recruitment process the Union Representatives' Committee participation (Junta PDI or Comitè d'Empresa PDI Laboral) must also be taken into account.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Vice-Rectorate for Teaching Staff - The Academic Staff Unit - Student Services and Programs Unit (Beques UB) | <p>April 2015 – June 2015</p> |
| <p>14. Selection (Code) (*)</p> | <p>Actions to be undertaken to achieve that UB researchers and candidates have a better knowledge on the evaluation process and the criteria adopted by the selection committees and the panels should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Calls for pre-doctoral, post-doctoral or tenure staff positions should provide a clear list of the candidate requirements - the Calls should specify how the merits of the candidates will be evaluated, the competences and qualifications required if there is an exam, and the prioritization criteria of the committee. - a posteriori, the names of the members of the Committee, and their final evaluation of the candidates, with an itemization of the evaluated points, should be provided for the sake of transparency. | <p>A code of good practices and recommendations for the implementation of transparency, fairness and non-discrimination in the evaluation process should be distributed to all the members of the Committees.</p> <p>The redaction of this Code would be a shared responsibility of several Vice-Rectorates, namely: the Vice-Rectorates for Research affairs and Science Policy and the Vice-Rectorate responsible for Teaching Staff.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Vice-Rectorates for Research and for Teaching Staff | <p>June 2015</p> |

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| 21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code) (*) | Additional actions required should concern: - increasing the transparency on the merits and qualifications required for the postdoctoral positions offered - creating specific programs to retain postdoctoral researchers of proved excellence (i.e. "Talent retention programme"). - facilitating mobility and re-engagement of postdoctoral researchers of exceptional quality | The Vice-Rectorates in charge of Research, Teaching Staff and International Policy should implement strategic actions to improve the general quality and visibility of the University excellence indicators. | - The Vice-Rectorates for Research, for Teaching Staff and for International Policy | November 2015 |
| 23. Research environment | - facilitate that the equipment co-financed with the UB support should be accordingly shared with researchers of other departments and groups. - examine the possibility to create short courses for researchers to acquire adequate training in safety measures and procedures when working in the lab (this possibility must be checked with the OSSMA and the vice-rectorates for research and/or students, and the ICE, etc.) .- provide research support with short courses for writing projects, planning adequate budget, submission to European Research projects (in collaboration with ICE, OGR and OPIR). - facilitate actions for local, national and international networking (in collaboration with FBG and OPIR). - follow up through time to observe the trend in improvement. | The Vice-Rectorate in charge of Research issues, with its offices (OPIR, OGR) is already implementing several programs and actions targeting these particular aims. Ongoing follow up of improvement in research indicators and the general impression of researchers will provide a measure of the efficacy of these actions, plus the enrolment to ICE Courses-OSSMA Courses, that can be within the frame of the Institutional Training Plan (ITP) | - Vice-Rectorate in charge of Research issues - Vice-Rectorate for Academic Policy - OPIR, FBG, OGR - OSSMA, ICE | - March 2015 - September 2015- June 2016 (for the ITP) |
| 24. Working conditions (*) | - facilitate the reduction of the work time due to maternity or paternity while keeping the post - allow a distribution of the teaching tasks compatible with family and children -- make publicly available the OSSMA documents related to the Procedures that protect particularly sensitive workers and women during pregnancy. These documents should be uploaded on the OSSMA website | The Vice-Rectorate responsible for Teaching Staff, the Vice-Rectorate in charge of Academic Policy and Quality and the Vice-Rectorate in charge of Administration and Organization should work together to be the most involved in order to implement favourable and non-discriminating actions when compatibilization of family with career is required by all the staff. | - Academic Staff Unit + OSSMA | March-April 2015 |
| 28. Career development (*) | Additional actions proposed to introduce significant improvement should: - create a specific Office for Mentoring Researchers and Academic personnel, with competent officers - create a Mentoring Action Plan, whereby a competent and qualified member of the University is able to provide advice, support and guidance to young researchers in their career development. | A specific Office with trained and competent staff of different disciplines, and expertise should be created to supervise a Mentoring Action Plan to be implemented in the different Faculties of the UB. | The Vice-Rectorate for Academic Policy as main promoter of the Institutional Training Plan, in collaboration with the UB Doctoral School and the Research advisory service (SAR) at the ICE. | Academic year Sept. 2015 – June 2016 |
| 39. Access to research training and continuous development | -Increase the dissemination among the TRS staff of those actions aiming at helping researchers to continue developing their skills and competences. | The Vice-Rectorate in charge of Science Policy and the Vice-Rectorate responsible for Academic Policy and | The Vice-Rectorate for Academic Policy as main promoter of the Institutional | - April 2015: Approval of the ITP by the UB |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement a variety of training courses to improve the skills, competences, and employability of the UB staff - See also point 28 | <p>Quality should work together the Vice-Rectorate for Research affairs and the Vice-Rectorate in charge of Teaching Staff to implement effective training courses and create an Office for Mentoring Researchers through their career at the UB.</p> | <p>Training Plan (ITP).</p> | <p>Governing Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - June 2015-July 2015: Finishing the planning of the training activities for the academic year 2015-2016. - Implementation of the ITP: Sept. 2015 – June 2016 |
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(*)UB Researchers marked these issues as highly important ones in the internal Survey which was performed in July 2013.

Please, see in attached documents the following Annexes:

Annex I - SUMMARY OF THE INTERNAL SURVEY DATA ADDRESSED AT THE UB RESEARCHERS.

The survey posed 20 Questions selected from the 40 Questions in the initial proposal for the adherence to the HRS4R (<http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/rights>)

Annex II - SUMMARY OF THE INTERNAL SURVEY DATA ADDRESSED AT THE UB RESEARCHERS (July 9-16, 2013)

A - DATA CONCERNING THE PARTICIPATION LEVEL

B - ANALYSIS OF THE ANSWERS GIVEN TO THE SELECTED 20 QUESTIONS, ORGANIZED IN FOUR GROUPS of Questions.

For each question, the researcher had to evaluate, according to their perception:

- the agreement with each statement, with a value ranging from 1 (total disagreement) up to 4 (total agreement);
- the degree of relevance they conceded to each question, with a value ranging from 1 (very low) to 4 (very high).

C - GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE ANSWERS TO THE 20 QUESTIONS, ORGANIZED IN FOUR GROUPS of Questions.