

EURAXESS

Renewal Phase Assessment With Site Visit - EC Consensus Report

Case number

2019ES379642

Name Organisation under assessment

Universidade de Vigo

Organisation's contact details

Campus universitario, s/n, Vigo, Pontevedra (Galicia), 36310, Spain

Submission date of the Internal Review

05/01/2023

Submission date to the European Commission

24/04/2023

Detailed assessment

a. Quality assessment

The quality assessment evaluates the level of ambition and the quality of progress intended by the organisation.

If any statements have prompted a "no" or "partly" in the evaluation, please provide recommendations:

	YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations
Has the organisational information been sufficiently updated to understand the context in which the HR Strategy is implemented?	Yes	The information was updated and presented in a well-structured form to ease the process of understanding the context of Strategy implementation. But there are some clarification needed on the extended actions , more than half of action are extended. A diagnostic analysis would be beneficial to design/update the AP.
Does the narrative provided list goals and objectives which clearly indicate the organisation's priorities in HR-management for researchers?	Partly	Strategic Plan(SP) 2021-2026, adopted in Dec.2020 includes objectives related to HR, the university is committed to boosting talents in teaching & research. Although goals and objectives have been listed, there is not a straightforward correlation between the results of the survey and the new action plan. Also, looking at the AP in detail, some clarifications are needed: - regarding the extended actions, - quantitative indicators in some cases are missing - the deadline is missing for some extended actions. The main recommendation is to revise the current AP auditing each action and their results to correct all discrepancies.

	YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations
Has the organisation published an updated HR Strategy and Action Plan been updated with the actions' current status, additions and/or modifications?	Yes	Yes, all HRS4R-related documents are published and were updated; the accessibility is good, 2 clicks away from the home page https://www.uvigo.gal/en/research/hr-excellence-research . It would be useful to made all information available in English, some documents are not necessary to go public. As transparent as possible and as closed as necessary.
Is the implementation of the HR strategy and Action Plan sufficiently embedded within the organisation's management structure (e.g. steering committee, operational responsibilities) so as to guarantee a solid implementation?	Yes	The AP implementation benefit of management structure having clear responsibility and distinctive actions to supervise and outputs deliver. There is a Steering committee, a Coordination Working Group, an Implementation WG and an OTM-R WG. Each management structure have his role and looking at their efforts one can see the strong commitment of the leadership to embedded C&C principles in organization's activities
Is the OTM-R policy in place and publicly available?	No	The OTM-R checklist is available, and it can be consulted anytime. The checklist reflects the progress of applying OTM-R in the recruitment and selection process. There is no OTM-R policy established by the organization, the deadline being Q3 of 2023

During the transition period special conditions apply:

Institutions having started the HRS4R implementation prior to the publication of the OTM-R toolkit and recommendations by the European Commission (2015) may not have prioritised actions implementing the OTM-R principles yet. In this case, they should not be penalised but strong recommendations should be made to address these principles appropriately.

Does the internal assessment of the institution give rise to any issues you wish to explore in more detail during the site visit? (max 1000 words)

The Desk assessment revealed some incoherences that need to be better explained and all three assessors have identified independently the same issues.

FEEDBACKS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

- more details about the results of the 2022 satisfaction survey are needed
- the survey has a low response rate, the questionnaire was distributed in Spanish to foreign researchers too, which are not supposed to master Spanish so well.
- the survey evidences a wide number of feedbacks that are scored around 2.5/5. These feedbacks clearly highlight that the recruitment process must be improved in transparency, openness and selection committees composition as well as the working conditions could have been put as high priority of next actions.

Weaknesses have been addressed also in the training and development programs, (eg. Satisfaction average Recruitment and selection 2,52 / 5; Feedbacks: To be improved Transparency (Code) (15) and Judging Merits (Code) (16)).

NEW ACTION PLAN

The new AP has only 2 new actions and more than half of the rest are extended actions without mentioning explicitly what priorities were established and on what ground.

EMBEDMENT

The Institution declared that the implementation of the HR (2017-2022) plan has been carried out by an executive WG. In this second cycle they want to take "this responsibility to another level, seeking a greater participation of the different research profiles (R1-R4)". It is not really clear from the narrative how they will implement in practice and how the monitoring system is going to be performed.

DOCUMENTS AVAILABILITY

The organization should make efforts to provide access to HRS4R relevant documents in EN.

MONITORING SYSTEM

The institution commented in a general way how the monitoring system has been carried out but it has not been detailed how the decision making process has been done.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The organization should pay attention to the researchers' training needs and to be focused to identify and address these needs with customized training courses.

Which elements of the HR strategy and Action Plan would you like to focus upon during the site visits? (max 1000 words)

During the site visit, the focus was on the following:

- 1) AP implementation process and the monitoring system: how it was, weaknesses and strengths; how to improve it;
- 2) HRS4R management: weaknesses and strengths, responsibilities, and the contingency plans
- 3) recruitment process: what improvements have been made?
- 4) resources allocation and priorities
- 5) raise awareness of C&C through better communications
- 6) mentoring - problems encountered and solutions offered
- 7) career development and professional stability


b. SITE-VISIT BASED Assessment

Please provide a brief answer to the following questions:

Note: Click on each question to open the editor.

1. Does the site visit confirm the impression made by the written self-evaluation report? ▼

- Yes**
- No**
- Partly**

2. What have been the benefits of implementing an HR Strategy in the organisation under review? How do you judge its overall impact and achievements? 

The benefits of implementing the HR Strategy were evident during the site visit. The following benefits were identified:

1. Increased visibility of the university
2. Internationalization and mobility - benefits mentioned by R1, and R2 researchers.
- 3) evident improvement in gender equality (gender equality plan) and ethics (ethics commission and code of ethics revision)
- 4) Open Science Policy has a positive impact.

Overall, discussions with the top management team and the HRS4R Steering Committee revealed a deep understanding of HRS4R benefits and aligned with the organization's goals and ambitions. Also, researchers demonstrated a good awareness of what the HRS4R award is and what it can bring them as benefits and opportunities to career development paths.

3. How do you judge the organisation's **level of ambition** with regard to its HR strategy for researchers, taking into account the initial state of play? ▼

Her level of ambition for the university is very high and is committed to making the most of such an award. This was obvious during the site visit, in all the presentations, where the ranking position was presented and direct comparison was made with the other universities of the area and the national average performance of universities. Being part of ATHENA (Advanced Technology Higher Education Network Alliance, the organization is pursuing its ambitious goals concerning international cooperation and visibility.


The sense of community is a very important incentive for researchers to perform at their very best.

The Rector says: "*Investing in people is important for us, so we want to attract talented researchers*" That is a declaration of commitment toward HRS4R and also an ambition of the top management to be pursued,

4. How do you judge the organisation's efforts to ensure the implementation of the Charter and Code principles regarding the **Ethical and Professional Aspects of Researchers**? ▼

The organization paid attention to ethical aspects: an Ethics Commission exists and functions, exists a Code of Ethics and researchers are aware of its provisions (verified in discussions with R1-R4 researchers); actions have been integrated into AP to address this issue.

Ethics and gender equality plans have been approved and implemented, including support to women in research with sustainable actions

5. How do you judge the organisation's efforts to ensure the implementation of the Charter and Code principles regarding the **Recruitment of Researchers? Is an OTM-R policy in place?** 

UVigo developed actions to improve the process of recruitment and selection of researchers. A new unit has been created -UCPI- having responsibilities in recruitment, selection, and appointment and also dealing with challenges coming from the recent adoption of Science Law and modification in working conditions according to the new Labour Law in Spain. Researchers confirmed a significant improvement in recruiting and selecting researchers.

The OTMR policy is not still published, th deadline being Q3 of 2023.

6. How do you judge the organisation's efforts to ensure the implementation of the Charter and Code principles regarding the **Researchers' Working conditions and Social Security?**



Based on the interview with the researchers:

- support from their supervisors exists, but researchers are not aware if there is a mechanism to overcome disagreements.
- researchers got support from the administration
- The university support researchers in obtaining a better work-life balance, offering kindergarten, summer camp for kids, etc.
- A researchers association was established by the researchers, and they need the support of the university to promote the existence of the association internally in order for more researchers to join.
- The time is limited due to other obligations. Postdoc researchers dedicate a lot of time to paperwork. PhDs dedicate a lot of time to the preparation of courses.
- Researchers feel fatigued with surveys, so their suggestion for collecting feedback is open discussions where they can talk about their experiences and issues to be solved.
- R1 and R2 are invited to participate in committees, e.g. ethics committee, but the awareness related to this opportunity is limited; potentially, the interest will increase if researchers are aware of this opportunity.
- The laws and funding limit the university, but the researchers expect the university support to promote their issues at a higher level to the government and the funding organizations

- R2 researchers mentioned that they would like to enjoy more stability of the working conditions

- There is funding for researchers and administrative staff, lack of funding to hire technical staff which is very important for research results

7. How do you judge the organisation's efforts to ensure the implementation of the Charter and Code principles regarding **Researchers' Development and Training**?

Attracting talented researchers is a priority goal and a strong commitment of the UVigo top management. Programs to attract valuable researchers have existed for a long time.

The university has established a clear path for the postdocs for the next steps of their career, but it is not always easy to follow, especially with specific types of funding.

A necessary action to be considered is related to improving career paths after Ph.D. graduation, not only to academia but primarily to facilitate the way toward industry.

Researchers feel the need to increase communication between the researchers and the research teams.

The training program includes a wide offer but mandatory courses are not customized to the R1&R2 needs. An important benefit for the researchers is the organization of soft skills training.

Discussions with researchers revealed that they fully know what career development means at UVigo. One R2 researcher said: " I know what I had to do to get where I want."

Please list one or more elements of good practice that you would recommend to other organisations – either in terms of action or in terms of coordination/process. (max 500 words)

- 1) Improved hiring mechanism with the new unit for hiring researchers (UCPI).
- 2) UVigo has a repository of open research papers/data named INVESTIGO which demonstrate significant steps made towards adoption Open Science principles

Strengths and weaknesses

On the basis of the information submitted and taking into account the organisation's national research context, how would you as an assessor judge the HR Strategy's **strengths and weaknesses?** (maximum 1000 words)

Strengths:

- strong commitment to implementing C&C principles, UVigo leadership took responsibility and understood that new managerial structures should be created to achieve strategic goals.
- the information provided in the internal/interim assessment was well organized, easy to follow the narrative, and highly valuable in understanding the context of AP & Strategy implementation
- The progress with respect to the previous assessment has been highlighted, and it is clear that they got benefits from the HRS4R implementation.

Weaknesses:

- Low level of participation in surveys, why are researchers not taking the surveys? Not interested? Not realizing the importance?
- AP dissemination - not so clear how it was carried out. Also, not so clear how the research community was informed about actions and benefits

If relevant, please provide suggestions for modifications or revisions to the (updated) HR strategy: (maximum 2000 words)

1. Update the Action Plan based on the comments
2. Improve communication to raise awareness on C&C and HRS4R, AP, and the benefits they can bring to the researchers and research community. Revise Communication Plan and ad actions in AP coming from researchers' suggestions
3. Improve researchers' consultation - networks can be a solution, engaging prestigious researchers as influencers, word-of-mouth technique to spread the word about why researchers need to participate in all kinds of consultations initiated by the organization.
4. establish contacts with other organization from Spain or abroad to initiate exchange of good practices and to improve the quality of all actions and results

General Assessment

Which of the below situations describes the organisation's progress most accurately? Tick the right situation regarding the award renewal application:.

Accepted



Pending **minor** modifications



Pending **major** revisions



Explanation

- **Accepted:** The organisation is progressing with appropriate and quality actions as described in its Action Plan. **There is evidence that the HRS4R is further embedded. The next assessment will take place in 36 months.**
- Pending **minor** modifications: The organisation is, for the most part, progressing with appropriate and quality actions as described in its Action Plan, but could benefit from alterations as advised through the Assessment process. **There is some evidence that the HRS4R is further embedded.**
The institution is requested to submit within 2 months a revised file taking into account the recommendations of the assessors.
- Pending **major** revisions: The organisation is not deemed to be implementing appropriate and quality actions and this raises some concern for the future efforts to implement actions closely aligned to the Charter and Code. **There is a lack of evidence that the HRS4R is further embedded.**
The institution is requested to submit within 12 months a revised file taking into account the recommendations of the assessors.
Until then, the HR Award will be put as "pending".

General Recommendations

If any of the above statements have prompted a "no" in the evaluation, please provide suggestions of modifications in the form below.

- If the general assessment is "pending minor modifications" the recommendations are split into:
 - Immediate mandatory recommendations (to be implemented for award renewal, resubmission within 2 months)
 - Other recommendations (to be carried out during the award renewal phase).
- If the general assessment is "pending major revisions" the recommendations are split into:
 - Mandatory recommendations (to be implemented for award renewal, resubmission within 12 months)
 - Other recommendations

Recommendations *

1. Mandatory update of the Action Plan: A lot of actions are implemented by the university but in some of them, the descriptions provided are not clear to understand the level of completion.
2. Internal communication should be improved. More specifically, researchers are aware of some of the activities implemented, but they don't know that are in the frame of HR strategy.
3. Improve the reporting of the HRS4R action plan implementation toward the Stakeholders (foreigners included).
4. Revise the action plan addressing actions that have been renewed slightly differently or updated as continuous. Differentiate them from the truly extended ones. Revise the schedule times/deadlines so that a more coherent action plan is developed (skip any safety pack approach);
5. Identify existing good practices inside and outside the organization and take advantage of the experience of others being valuable to further improvements.
6. Researchers believe in the benefits of mobility. It would be nice for university to offer them more mobility opportunities
7. measure the impact of the implemented actions: surveys or any tool of consultation must also be in English;
8. promote and support the sense of community and sense of belonging to the institution.
9. Work on establishing a system of incentives and rewards to retain talented researchers
10. publish the OTMR policy;

Not implementing the above recommendations may affect negatively the results of next assessment phase

If the organisation deserves to be commended on their ambition, their actions, evidence of good practice and/or their implementation process, please provide a commentary supporting this. (max. 2000 words)

The HR strategy is embedded in the university, and there is evidence of the efforts in this direction.

The commitment to implementing the C&C is clear, it has been included also in the University's strategic plan.

Special emphasis should be given in the mandatory update of the Action Plan but also in the rest of the suggestion that could help the organization increase the advantages from the strategy implementation but also the be prepared for the next evaluation in 3 years time.