

Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)

The European Charter for Researchers

The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

at the University of Siegen

Appendix II: Action Plan

Human Resources Strategy for Researchers: Action Plan

The University of Siegen, conscious of the fact that maintaining and expanding attractiveness for the best researchers from around the world is essential for the success of research as well as research-based teaching, has decided to bring together its human resources activities for researchers within the framework of the European “Human Resources Strategy for Researchers” (HRS4R)¹, including

- The “European Charter for Researchers”
- The “Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers”

The HRS4R process has thus been strategically aligned with the ongoing process of the drafting of a Human Resources Development Concept for all employees of the University.

Based on a comprehensive internal gap analysis undertaken in 2016, the University Rectorate has proposed an “Action Plan” in five topical areas which together constitute the 40 principles of Charter and Code, namely:

- Rules of good scientific practice and ethical issues
- Working conditions
- Equal opportunities and non-discrimination
- Career perspectives and training
- Recruitment

With regard to the “Researcher lifecycle”, actions regarding junior (doctoral as well as postdoctoral) researchers have been given due prominence regarding the main actions.

The following pages present the main (priority) as well as supplementary actions agreed as a result of the gap analysis.

For each action, intended objectives and tasks are defined, the responsible unit plus additional stakeholders involved as well as the intended beneficiaries are named, and a timeline for implementation is set out.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/strategy4Researcher>

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Main Action 1. Conclusion of a Supervision Agreement for PhD Researchers²

The University of Siegen has the legal obligation to conclude the template of a supervision agreement (*Betreuungsvereinbarung, Promotionsvereinbarung*) specifying the mutual obligations of doctoral researchers and their supervisors. A draft is currently being debated and revised in talks with the faculties, especially the Faculty Councils (*Fakultätsräte*) and PhD Committees (*Promotionsausschüsse*).

Intended beneficiaries. Doctoral researchers

Responsibility. The University Rectorate, with lead responsibility assumed by the Vice-President for Research and Junior Academics, supported by the head of the House of Young Talents and his team, will pursue its talks on the existing draft of a supervision agreement with the competent institutions (Faculty Councils and PhD Committees) of the four faculties and in consultation with the Legal Department. The responsible organs (Rectorate and Senate) of the University as well as of the faculties will pass the finalized agreement.

Timeline for Implementation: The process is ongoing; the final supervision agreement is to be passed by December 2017.

² Referring to the principles “Relations with Supervisors” [No 10], “Supervision and Managerial Duties” [No 11] and “Supervision” [No 26].

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Main Action 2. Implementation of a Tenure-Track Model³

The University of Siegen is in the final stages of developing a tenure-track model for junior professors (*Juniorprofessoren*), focused in particular on making the options included in the Federal/State “Pact for Junior Academics” (*Nachwuchspakt*) both innovative and sustainable in the long run. This model will provide for clear goals and performance agreements (*Ziel- und Leistungsvereinbarungen*) and how they are to be evaluated, thus providing full transparency on the paths towards tenure.

Intended beneficiaries. Junior professors

Responsibility. The University Rectorate, with lead responsibility assumed by the Vice-President for Research and Junior Academics, based on proposals to be submitted by the faculties and by the head of the Human Resources Department (*Personaldezernat*), and supported by the House of Young Talents (regarding best-practice examples) and the Departments of University Planning and of Finance (regarding sustainability), will pass a tenure-track model.

Timeline for Implementation: The process is ongoing; the model is to be passed by February 2017.

³ Referring to the principles “Stability and Permanence of Employment” [No 17], “Career Development” [No 20], “Supervision” [No 26], “Evaluation/Appraisal Systems” [No 28] and “Postdoctoral Appointments” [No 40].

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Main Action 3. Improved Transparency and Perspectives for Postdoctoral Researchers⁴

The University of Siegen recognizes a need to provide greater transparency and to work towards greater stability of postdoctoral careers and career options. This effort includes the tenure-track model (see Main Action 2), but also alternative paths. Natural mentors regarding career paths, not only in academia but also in other public institutions, in private firms/industry or as entrepreneurs, are the immediate superiors (professors) working in a similar area with similar expertise. Complementing this, existing counselling, coaching and mentoring opportunities are to be expanded in reach and depth, on a strictly voluntary basis and taking into account career paths inside and outside the university system.

Intended beneficiaries. Postdoctoral researchers, especially those in an early-postdoc stage

Responsibility. The Human Resources Department, assuming lead responsibility but working closely with the faculties, the House of Young Talents, the Vice-President for Research and Junior Academics and all actors engaged in counselling, mentoring and coaching; taking into account best-practice examples; and consulting with the Staff Council for Academic and Artistic Personnel (*Personalrat für wissenschaftliches und künstlerisches Personal*), will develop measures to improve transparency and stability of career paths for post-doctoral researchers.

Timeline for Implementation: The measures are to be presented to the responsible organs (Rectorate, Senate) by the end of 2017 and to be passed by March 2018.

⁴ Referring to the principles “Stability and Permanence of Employment” [No 17], “Career Development” [No 20], “Supervision” [No 26] and “Postdoctoral Appointments” [No 40].

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Main Action 4. Review of Current Recruitment Policies and Practices with Respect to the OTM-R Principles⁵

The University of Siegen has in recent years instituted quality control mechanisms incorporating many elements of the “Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment of Researchers” (OTM-R); these include general quality control mechanisms (including specific elements on recruitment) as well as an order and guidelines for professorial appointments and general guidelines for recruitment, securing e. g. transparency, non-discrimination (including gender balance in recruiting commissions), openness and other relevant points.

Intended beneficiaries. All researchers

Responsibility. The Human Resources Department, assuming lead responsibility, will install a working group including relevant stakeholders of the University, in particular the faculties, to undertake a review of current recruitment policies and practices, as recently amended in 2014-16, using the “toolkit” and especially the “checklist” developed by the OTM-R Steering Group. As part of the review of recruitment policies and practices on all levels, opportunities to expand (e. g. to shortlisted candidates) and upgrade transparency of feedback regarding strengths and weaknesses to unsuccessful applicants as far as feasible will be a particular focus.

Timeline for Implementation: An intermediate report will be compiled by November 2018. The full review is to be completed by November 2020 and will incorporate all quality-safeguarding instruments developed by the University.

⁵ Referring to the principle “Recruitment” of the “Charter for Researchers” [No 31] as well as to the complete “Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers”: “Recruitment” [No 32], “Selection” [No 33], “Transparency” [No 34], “Judging Merit” [No 35], “Variations in the Chronological Order of CVs” [No 36], “Recognition of Mobility Experience” [No 37], “Recognition of Qualifications” [No 38], “Seniority” [No 39] and “Postdoctoral Appointments” [No 40].

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Supplementary Action 1. Finalization of a Human Resources Development Concept⁶

The University of Siegen has aligned its Human Resources Strategy for Researchers with the process streamlining existing modules into a comprehensive and sustainable Human Resources Development Concept (*Personalentwicklungskonzept*) comprising all personnel, including staff in administrative and technical support of research and academic teaching. As the processes have been moving in tandem, the Human Resources Development Concept is almost finalized.

Intended beneficiaries. All employees of the University, including all researchers

Responsibility. The Human Resources Department, assuming lead responsibility, with support from the House of Young Talents (regarding junior researchers), will present the concept, after mandated consultations with employee representatives (Staff Councils, Equal Opportunities Officer, Representative of Employees with Disabilities) to the responsible organs (Rectorate, Senate) of the University.

Timeline for Implementation: The current drafts being optimized will be finalized and merged by January 2017. The responsible organs will pass the concept by February 2017.

⁶ Referring to the principles “Continuing Professional Development” [No 12] and “Career Development” [20], but in a more general sense to all principles of the “European Charter for Researchers” and the “Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers”.

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Supplementary Action 2. Optimized Information of Early-Stage and Experienced Researchers on the Rules of Good Scientific Practice and the Ethics of Science⁷

For most junior researchers, the professor is a natural guide regarding good scientific practice. In addition, the University of Siegen has established several organs, including a Council for Ethics in Research, and has various quality control mechanisms in place, to address ethical concerns and prevent academic misconduct. To optimize the proactive information of all researchers, but with a particular focus on junior and incoming researchers, the House of Young Talents and the Human Resources Department will jointly organize regular workshops, incorporating input from other stakeholders, at least one in English and one in German at least once a year each, open to all researchers on a voluntary basis and addressing all aspects of the Charter for Researchers and related issues. Relevant material will also be made available to researchers in electronic form. New employees will receive a “Welcome Folder” with pertinent information.

Intended beneficiaries. All researchers, with a focus on junior and incoming staff

Responsibility. The House of Young Talents (regarding junior researchers) and the Human Resources Department (regarding full professors) assume lead responsibility, aggregating input from external experts and other stakeholders, especially the faculties.

Timeline for Implementation: The workshops are to be offered for the first time not later than 2018. The “Welcome Folders” are to be handed out to all newly employed researchers from January 2018.

⁷ Referring to the principles “Research Freedom” [No 1], “Ethical Principles” [No 2], “Professional Responsibility” [No 3], “Professional Attitude” [No 4], “Contractual and Legal Obligations” [No 5], “Accountability” [No 6], “Good Practice in Research” [No 7], “Dissemination, Exploitation of Results” [No 8], “Public Engagement” [No 9], “Intellectual Property Rights” [No 24] and “Co-Authorship” [No 25].

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Supplementary Action 3. Optimization of Cross-Faculty Professional Development Courses⁸

Subject-oriented professional development of researchers takes place in the faculties and their departments, seminars, institutes, chairs and groups. In addition, co-operation with external (including intersectoral) partners and participation in national and international expert associations and professional societies and attendance at their conferences and meetings guarantee continuing professional development. Support mechanisms regarding such participation are in place. For cross-faculty (interdisciplinary) professional courses, the House of Young Talents and the Human Resources Department will upgrade a curriculum of voluntary courses and analyse potentially unmet needs, including regarding distance learning (e-learning, blended learning).

Intended beneficiaries. All researchers, with a focus on junior and incoming staff

Responsibility. The House of Young Talents (regarding junior researchers) and the Human Resources Department (regarding full professors) assume lead responsibility, systematically collecting evaluations from researchers and moving to fill perceived gaps.

Timeline for Implementation: The analysis of existing offers, begun in 2015/16, will be continued until February 2019, with changes to the available formats incorporated regularly (every six months) on the basis of feedback. A full report will be issued in June 2019.

⁸ Referring to the principles “Continuing Professional Development” [No 12], “Access to Research Training and Continuous Development” [No 22] and “Access to Career Service” [No 23].

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Supplementary Action 4. Joint Web Presence of Actors in Human Resources Development⁹

At the University of Siegen, various actors complement each other in providing interdisciplinary workshops, courses and events, as well as offering counselling, coaching and mentoring to a range of groups from students to full professors, with unavoidable and indeed desirable overlap. To make finding and choosing suitable courses and other offers easier for the intended beneficiaries, a joint web presence is to be implemented providing annotated links to individual actors.

Intended beneficiaries. All members of the University, including all researchers

Responsibility. The Human Resources Department, assuming lead responsibility, with support from the Press Office and the Computer and Media Centre, will coordinate the website, incorporating input delivered by the Working Group Human Resources Development (*Arbeitskreis Personalentwicklung*) set up by actors in 2016.

Timeline for Implementation: The web presence will be made available by the end of 2017.

⁹ Referring to the principles “Continuing Professional Development” [No 12], “Access to Research Training and Continuous Development” [No 22] and “Access to Career Service” [No 23].

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Supplementary Action 5. Survey Regarding Tele-Work/Home Office and Optimization of Collective Agreement¹⁰

Since 2006, the University of Siegen has been continuously re-certified as a family-friendly institution of higher education. Collective Agreements (*Dienstvereinbarungen*) regarding flexible working hours (last revised in 2015) and regarding tele-work/Home Office (2009) are in place, and a large number of individual models with respect to part-time work are practised. The Collective Agreement on tele-work/Home Office is currently being evaluated and reviewed.

Intended beneficiaries. All employees of the University, including all researchers

Responsibility. The Human Resources Department, assuming lead responsibility, in close contact with the working group which includes employee representatives (Staff Councils, Equal Opportunities Officer, Representative of Employees with Disabilities), is carrying out a survey of all employees who have ever participated in tele-work/Home Office, and of their superiors, to evaluate the current model.

Timeline for Implementation: The report on the survey will be completed by June 2017, and the agreement modified accordingly (if necessary) by the end of 2017, to be passed by the relevant organs (Rectorate, Senate) of the University by February 2018.

¹⁰ Referring to the principle “Working Conditions” [No 16].