



**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**

November 2016

## 1 Siegen and Its University

The University of Siegen is a young and modern university in the centre of the triangle formed by the German states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Hesse, and Rhineland-Palatinate. Siegen-Wittgenstein is the most southerly district of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the most populous of the sixteen German states; Siegen (pop. 100,000) is the district's administrative centre. None of the surrounding administrative districts across three states has a university, resulting in a large and populous area where Siegen is the natural choice for young people going to college.

The tradition of higher education in Siegen can be traced to the Reformation in the 16th century. The *Universa Schola Nassovica Sigenensis* (High School of the State of Nassau at Siegen) flourished at Siegen before and after 1600, incidentally a time when Siegen also experienced a wave of internationalization, which saw Prince Johann Moritz of Nassau-Siegen become governor of Netherlands' Brazil in 1638. On the opposite end of the humanities' canon taught at the High School, the *Wiesenbauschule* for Civil Engineering was founded in 1853, later growing into a university of applied sciences. Another nucleus was a specialized school for the iron and steel industry (the mainstay of the region's economy, which even today is dominated by innovative steel, metalworking and mechanical engineering firms).

After the Second World War, higher education expanded greatly, particularly in Westphalia. Siegen received a Pedagogical College in 1964, and the University of Siegen was founded in 1972 as the result of a fusion of this college with the university of applied sciences.<sup>1</sup>

The resulting traditions can still be discerned in the University of Siegen today: The University has a strong research-oriented tradition in the humanities and social and educational sciences, but also in engineering, the natural and computer sciences, and in economics. A strong focus has always been put, from the inception in 1972, on the expansion to, and inclusion of, new strata of society, providing access to higher education and research to previously disadvantaged groups of the population, and this successful policy continues today, with a particular focus on first- and second-generation migrants and ensuring equal opportunities for all. The University is embracing diversity and its motto is "Creating a Human Future" (*Zukunft menschlich gestalten*).

At present (Winter Term 2016/17), almost 20,000 students are enrolled in more than 40 study courses for Bachelor's and Master's degrees; more than 250 professors and 1,000 additional researchers (early-stage and experienced) are employed in research and teaching, supported by an administrative/technical staff of around 700.

The University of Siegen, with its strong grounding and multiple close partnerships in the region, pursues an active policy of internationalization. There are more than 120

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<sup>1</sup> For the history of the University see Universität Siegen (ed.): *Die Gründung und die Gründer. Ein Rückblick auf die Anfänge der Universität Siegen (1972-1980)*, Siegen: universi, 2012 [The Founding and the Founders: A Look Back to the Beginnings of Siegen University (1972-1980)].

international partnerships; 150 ERASMUS partner institutions; more than 2,000 international students (plus several hundred with an immigrant background) from almost 100 countries; and almost 300 foreign doctoral and postdoctoral researchers. There is intense international co-operation in research in many fields.

The University leadership is actively engaged in national and international organizations and strongly focused on improving the conditions of researchers. Exemplifying this, the Rector, Professor Holger Burckhart, is a Vice-President of the German University Rector's Association (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz HRK*); the Vice-President for Research and Junior Academics, Professor Peter Haring Bolívar, is an active participant in the European University Association EUA (strategy group member); and the Chancellor (head of the administrative staff), Mr. Ulf Richter, was the sole German member of the Steering Group for Human Resources Management (SGHRM) compiling the report on the Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers (OTM-R) in 2015.

## 2 Structures and Decision-Making

The University of Siegen, as a public university of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, is constituted as a Corporation of Public Law (*Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts*). The institutional structures of the University of Siegen are laid down in the Basic Order (*Grundordnung*). The central organs of the University are:

- The Rectorate
- The Rector
- The University Council (*Hochschulrat*)
- The University Senate
- The University Electoral Conference (*Hochschulwahlversammlung*)

The main executive organ is the Rectorate headed by the Rector. Both are elected by the University Electoral Conference, consisting of representatives of the University Council and the University Senate. Via general elections, the Senate represents all status groups within the University membership, defined as:

- Professors
- Academic and Artistic Staff
- Staff in Technical and Administrative Support
- Students

As the main deliberative body consisting of elected representatives of all status groups (students, technical and administrative staff, academic staff and professors), the Senate has a number of Standing Commissions:

- Commission for Study and Teaching

- Commission for Research and Junior Academics
- Commission for Strategic University Development
- Commission for International Affairs and Cooperation

The central organs are supported by the university administration, which is headed by the Chancellor of the University of Siegen, and consists of six departments:

- Department of Finance
- Department of University Planning
- Department of Legal and Academic Affairs
- Department of Human Resources
- Department of Building and Property Management
- Division for Student Service

Professors and academic staff, inasmuch as they are not exempted from their duties to serve temporarily in the central organs (like the Rector, full-time, and the Vice-Presidents, on an honorary basis), are employed in the four faculties, where research and teaching as the key work of a University are carried out:

- Faculty I: Faculty of Arts and Humanities
- Faculty II: Education · Architecture · Arts
- Faculty III: School of Economic Disciplines
- Faculty IV: Science and Technology

The faculties are administered by the respective Dean's Office and in turn consist of a number of Seminars (Faculty I), Departments (Faculties II and IV) and Institutes (Faculty III), further subdividing down to individual chairs and groups. The faculties have a democratic constitution as well, including representatives of all status groups in all decision-making bodies. The Faculty Council elects the Dean. It is the faculties who hold the right to confer the doctorate (*Promotionsrecht*), and who therefore constitute their PhD Councils (*Promotionsausschüsse*), acting according to PhD Regulations (*Promotionsordnungen*), separate for each faculty.

In addition to the central organs and administration on the one hand and the faculties on the other, there are a number of scientific and service institutions strengthening the close interconnection between the academic and the administrative sectors of the University. Many of these units have a particular relevance in providing support for researchers.

- Alumni Association
- Career Service
- Competence Centre (Courses in didactics and foreign languages)
- Computer and Media Centre
- Connect.US (Transfer service)

- Dual Career Service
- Family Service Office
- Entrepreneurs' Office
- House of Young Talents (Graduate and postgraduate academy)
- Job Placement Office
- Research-Support Unit
- UniPrint (Printing Shop)
- University Archives
- University Library
- University Publishing House "universi"
- Women-Specific Mentoring Programme and Women Career Service

The elected representatives of the Staff (academic and artistic personnel electing one body, technical and administrative personnel the other), the Equal Opportunities Officer, and the representatives of disabled members of the University have a strong and legally mandated representation in all decision-making processes.

In close cooperation with the Senate, the Steering Committee Quality Management (*Lenkungsausschuss QM*, LAQ) oversees the cross-sectoral development and applications of instruments of quality control, providing direction for the quality-control measures of several other steering groups, of the faculties and of cross-faculty teacher education. For its own quality assessment, the LAQ employs external auditors, and implements necessary improvements.

Regarding ethical questions and those touching upon rules of good scientific practice, a university-wide Council for Ethics in Research (*Rat für Ethik in der Forschung*) is in place, flanked by ombudspersons in all faculties.

### 3 Human Resources Development at the University

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)<sup>2</sup>, 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.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/strategy4Researcher>

As a result of this process, a comprehensive internal gap analysis, numerous measures have already been undertaken within the last few years. A large part of the more momentous actions agreed upon has already come to fruition in the second half of 2015 and the first half of 2016 (see Column “Existing rules or practices” in the Appendix for more details).

After consultations with the actors and stakeholders, the Rectorate has decided in 2016 that the process regarding the “Human Resources Strategy for Researchers”, which had been intermittently pursued since early 2013 within the Human Resources Department, should now be fully aligned with the activities regarding the Human Resources Development Concept.

The consultation process has thus been fused by integrating the modules already undertaken before and strengthening it through additional HRS4R-specific modules. Clear priority has been given throughout to the inclusion of researchers in the gap analysis.

The process has the full support of the Rectorate and the other pertinent organs of the University; it was debated in the University Senate, the main deliberative body where all status groups within the University have their elected representatives. Personnel from the Human Resources Department, the House of Young Talents and the Research-Support Unit (*Referat Forschungsförderung*), have been asked to support the HRS4R process.

The involvement of researchers was ensured through workshops and meetings of this HRS4R working group with representatives of the Working Group of Members of the Scientific Mid-Level Personnel (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Mitglieder des wissenschaftlichen Mittelbaus*) and the Staff Council for Academic and Artistic Personnel (*Personalrat für das künstlerische und wissenschaftliche Personal*) on the one hand and with the Vice-President for Research and Junior Academics and the Vice-Deans for Research of the four faculties in a session of the House of Young Talent’s Steering Committee on the other.

The needs of the junior/early-stage researchers (those working on their dissertation) in particular as a core target group partly difficult to reach were a major focus. In co-operation of the office of the Vice-President for Research and Junior Academics, the Research-Support Unit and the Department of University Planning, an anonymous survey with 47 items was devised and distributed to all (almost 800) enrolled PhD researchers of the University. 272 completed questionnaires were received (answers to individual items range from 262 to 272) and have provided valuable guidance about the felt needs of the researchers, contributing to the concept for the House of Young Talents.

The newly constituted cross-sectional working group from the Human Resources Department, the House of Young Talents and the Research-Support Unit has been in close contact with other organisations which have completed the HRS4R process or

are currently engaged in it, namely the Cologne University of Applied Sciences (*Technische Hochschule Köln*), the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, and the Berlin Social Science Center (*Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialwissenschaften WZB*). Members of the working group participated in workshops on Human Resources Strategies for Researchers, e. g. at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf and RWTH Aachen University, and finally a workshop organized by the University Rectors' Conference (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz HRK*) working group on HRS4R at the Cologne University of Applied Sciences and chaired by Dr. Gerhard Duda, the head of the Brussels office of the HRK.

Since 2012, the University of Siegen has been implementing a Quality Management System (QMS), and all embedded structures and processes are in place by now. The QMS at the University has two innovative aspects: On the one hand it implements a European perspective, on the other hand it follows a holistic approach that ensures the quality of all processes relevant to a university, namely research (including infrastructure) and teaching, but also transfer and the "Third Mission" of engagement with and for society, services (including administrative and governance structures). The European perspective is incorporated, as the University of Siegen is part of a consortium of European universities which agreed – jointly with the European University Association (EUA) – to develop a European Quality Audit (EQA) along the lines of this holistic approach. The EQA, once completed, will eventually become the guideline for the QMS of the University of Siegen, and possibly also a new instrument of quality assurance in the European Research Area.

The field "Service" within the QMS of the University of Siegen includes the quality assurance of all procedures related to human resources, including recruitment processes at any level, ranging from administrative and technical to scientific personnel, including the recruitment of professors. The corresponding structures and processes are in place and will eventually also be incorporated into the EQA.

#### 4 The HRS4R Action Plan

The comprehensive gap analysis was conducted using the template provided on the HRS4R website, but following the order of the 40 principles in the original (2005) text.<sup>3</sup> The table with the outcome of the gap analysis is appended to this document.

Most of the principles are already fully implemented at the University of Siegen; monitoring and evaluation processes regarding them are established as ongoing processes. Some principles still show gaps, sometimes conditioned by legal or budgetary constraints.

In the course of the gap analysis, four main (priority) and five supplementary actions were identified. The main actions are those where improvement is deemed necessary;

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<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/brochure\\_rights/am509774CEE\\_EN\\_E4.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/brochure_rights/am509774CEE_EN_E4.pdf)

whereas the supplementary actions pertain to principles of “Code” or “Charter” which the University of Siegen fully implements but where there is a wish for still further systematic improvements.

#### 4.1 Conclusion of a Supervision Agreement for PhD Researchers<sup>4</sup> (Main Action)

The University of Siegen has the legal obligation to conclude 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 with the Faculty Councils (*Fakultätsräte*) and PhD Committees (*Promotionsausschüsse*).

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

#### 4.2 Implementation of a Tenure-Track Model<sup>5</sup> (Main Action)

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.

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

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<sup>4</sup> Referring to the principles “Relations with Supervisors” [No 10], “Supervision and Managerial Duties” [No 11] and “Supervision” [No 26].

<sup>5</sup> 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].



tenure-track model. The process is ongoing; the model is to be passed by February 2017.

#### 4.3 Improved Transparency and Perspectives for Postdoctoral Researchers<sup>6</sup> (Main Action)

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.

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 postdoctoral researchers. The measures are to be presented to the responsible organs (Rectorate, Senate) by the end of 2017 and to be passed by March 2018.

#### 4.4 Review of Current Recruitment Policies and Practices with Respect to the OTM-R<sup>7</sup> (Main Action)

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.

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<sup>6</sup> Referring to the principles “Stability and Permanence of Employment” [No 17], “Career Development” [No 20], “Supervision” [No 26] and “Postdoctoral Appointments” [No 40].

<sup>7</sup> 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].

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. 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.

#### 4.5 Finalization of a Human Resources Development Concept<sup>8</sup> (Supplementary Action)

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.

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

#### 4.6 Optimized Information of Early-Stage and Experienced Researchers on the Rules of Good Scientific Practice and the Ethics of Science<sup>9</sup> (Supplementary Action)

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,

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<sup>8</sup> 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”.

<sup>9</sup> 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].

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.

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. 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.

#### 4.7 Optimization of Cross-Faculty Professional Development Courses<sup>10</sup> (Supplementary Action)

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 with respect to distance learning (e-learning, blended learning).

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. 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.

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<sup>10</sup> 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].

#### 4.8 Joint Web Presence of Actors in Human Resources Development<sup>11</sup> (Supplementary Action)

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.

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. The web presence will be made available by the end of 2017.

#### 4.9 Survey Regarding Tele-Work/Home Office and Optimization of Collective Agreement<sup>12</sup> (Supplementary Action)

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.

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. 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.

## 5 Conclusion

The University of Siegen has made significant progress in optimizing the situation of researchers at all stages of their careers and continues to be an attractive address for international researchers. Recently introduced changes will, it is hoped, go a long way towards strengthening further the attractiveness of Siegen. In endorsing the “European

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<sup>11</sup> 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].

<sup>12</sup> Referring to the principle “Working Conditions” [No 16].

Charter for Researchers” and the “Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers” and applying for the “Human Resources Excellence in Research” award, the University hopes to send a strong signal about its commitment to ever improving conditions for researchers from Germany, the European Research Area and beyond.