NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

hr
HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

HRS4R - The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers

Strategy and Action Plan

THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS (HRS4R)

INCORPORATING THE CHARTER & CODE AT NUI GALWAY.

On the 11th March 2005 the European Commission introduced the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The Charter and Code includes 40 principles and requirements which specifies the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and/or funders of researchers.

The aim of the <u>Charter</u> is to ensure that the nature of the relationship between researchers and employers and/or funders is conducive to successful performance in generating, transferring, sharing and disseminating knowledge and technological development, and to the career development of researchers.

The <u>Charter</u> constitutes a framework for researchers, employers and funders which invites them to act responsibly and as professionals within their working environment, and to recognise each other as such.

The <u>Code of Conduct</u> for the recruitment of researchers consists of a set of general principles and requirements that should be followed by employers and/or funders when appointing or recruiting researchers.

NUI Galway endorsed the Charter and Code on 13th September 2006[1].

Since then more than 1200 institutions in 37 participating countries have signed up to the Charter and the Code and a new support tool was introduced to encourage more institutions to take better ownership of the Charter and the Code in their own human resources policy. The new support tool is called the "**Human Resources Strategy for Researchers Incorporating the Charter & Code"**[2]**.** Institutions can earn the 'HR Excellence in Research Logo' by participating in and successfully completing the HRS4R process.

About NUI Galway.

Founded in 1845 as Queen's College Galway with 63 students, NUI Galway today has a student population of 17,483, including 3,548 postgraduate students. In 2012/13 there were 2,366 international students from 110 different countries. Our staff of 2,561 include 60 different nationalities.

The University, situated in the heart of Galway city, has over 90 buildings on 105 hectares. NUI Galway is in the middle of a €400 million construction programme - the largest expansion of facilities of any university in Ireland. <u>NUI Galway virtual tour</u>

NUI Galway is ranked third of the Irish universities in international rankings (the *Times Higher Education* (THE) World University Rankings, announced in October 2012). In September 2012, NUI Galway secured the biggest boost of the Irish universities in the prestigious *QS World University Rankings*, an annual league table of the top 700 universities

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[1] <u>IUA Cooperation Accord 2006</u>
[2] <u>http://hrs4r.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/paper_on_the_hr_strategy_for_researchers.pdf</u>

in the world. The *QS World University Rankings* by Subject, announced later in the year, saw NUI Galway appear on the list of the world's top 200 universities in five subject areas. Meanwhile, NUI Galway remains one of only two Irish universities to hold the prestigious accolade of five stars in the QS Stars rating system. Five stars are awarded for exceptional developments in education, including teaching and research activity, as well as for top quality facilities. This success in teaching excellence and research is reflected by the fact that the University continues to be one of the top universities in Ireland for student retention and graduate employment.

The Irish language has a unique position in the National University of Ireland, Galway. This is predominantly due to its proximity to the Connemara Gaeltacht, one of several Irish-speaking regions in Ireland. Furthermore, its links with the region are strengthened by its Irish language education and cultural centres in the towns of An Cheathrú Rua and Carna, Co. Galway and Gaoth Dobhair, Co. Donegal. The University offers a bilingual environment where the Irish language is regularly used in academic and social life on campus.

Definition of a researcher

For the purposes of the NUI Galway HRS4R Gap Analysis and Action Plan, postgraduate researchers are termed Early-stage Researchers and postdoctoral and other researchers are referred to as Experienced Researchers. This is in line with European Commission documentation which defines Early-stage Researchers as researchers in the first 4 years (full-time equivalent) of their research activity, including the period of research training. Experienced Researchers are defined as researchers having at least four years of research experience (full-time equivalent) since gaining a university degree/ diploma giving them access to doctoral studies, in the country in which the degree/diploma was obtained or researchers already in possession of a doctoral degree, regardless of the time taken to acquire it.[3]

It should be noted that in the Irish higher education system researchers at postgraduate level (early-stage researchers) are not, in most cases, employees but are registered as full-time students. The Charter and Code outlines principles targeted at employers of researchers and this does not therefore include postgraduate researchers in the Irish context. However, for the purpose of the Gap Analysis and Action Plan all researchers are considered professionals regardless of their employment status. This does not, however, constitute a transfer of employee rights or the creation of a relationship of employment for these early-stage researchers. In considering the application of the Charter and Code principles to the policies and practices in NUI Galway, researchers at all stages of the career trajectory were considered.[4]

Project Methodology

Following a successful expression of interest, NUI Galway was accepted to participate in the fourth cohort of the EU HR Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) Group. A representative of

[3] http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/definitions
[4] http://www.ucd.ie/definition

NUI Galway attended the kick-off meeting for this group in Brussels on 29th October 2012. This meeting provided the background knowledge and some case studies from staff in Universities who had already achieved the logo.

Following on from this meeting the forty principles of the Charter and Code were reviewed initially by staff of both the human resources and research office at NUI Galway to determine how best to conduct the initial gap analysis. The project was sponsored by the Vice President for Research and the project was supported by and derives its authority from the Research Committee at NUI Galway. The research committee included the following personnel;

  ➢ University Registrar and Deputy President
  ➢ Vice President for Research
  ➢ Dean of graduate studies
  ➢ Vice deans for research
  ➢ Directors of research institutes
  ➢ Elected members of Údarás (University governing authority)
  ➢ Postgraduate representatives
  ➢ Research Officer
  ➢ HR manager - research

A project team was created to conduct the initial gap analysis and report back to the research committee.

Note: In its commitment to research at NUI Galway, the University had recently completed a full institutional review of research performance and another project into research support services was also underway. This project team was very conscious that staff may experience survey fatigue so it was decided to deliver information sessions to key stakeholders to explain the background to the HR Excellence in Research project and to use focus groups to gather feedback and support.

In April 2013 two NUI Galway staff, representing both the HR and Research offices attended a meeting of the HRS4R group hosted by Kozminski University in Warsaw, Poland where further details and support to assist universities in obtaining the HR Excellence in Research logo were delivered by previously successful applicants and EU representatives.

Using the template provided by the EU as a guide the project team conducted the initial gap analysis. Information was gathered from a wide range of sources and focus groups included staff from our Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), Graduate studies, Library, Press & Information office, Information Solutions & Services (ISS), Technology Transfer Office, Research Office and Human Resources. Further contributors to the project included staff from; Health & Safety, Disability, Equality, International affairs, Staff training & development, student services and many others.

The initial results of the gap analysis were then sent to the representatives of the Research Committee for comment and approval in advance of circulation to all staff. Staff were given the opportunity to raise queries and submit additional information to the project co-ordinator and a final revised gap analysis was sent to the research committee members.

Summary findings

This exercise proved very beneficial to the staff working in both research and research support areas within the university. It became evident very quickly that staff are very proactive and were using very good practices in line with legislation and recommendations of best practice from various external, approved authorities. Key strengths were identified in the areas of student support services, structured PhD programmes, training and career support for early stage researchers while recruitment, working conditions, on-boarding/induction of new hires and social protection were evidently quite strong for other experienced researchers.

The University is an integral part of the city and there is a high level of outreach activities and community support. For example, the Community Knowledge Initiative is a major, strategic project supported both by the University and substantial external donations. It encourages greater 'civic engagement,' linking university and community. http://cki.nuigalway.ie

Some respondents stated that they were unaware of many of the supports, services and policies in place at the University. As the University has expanded, particularly in the area of research, over the past 8-10 years the responses required to manage that growth may not have always been communicated to all staff or incorporated into formal policies. This exercise has demonstrated not only the need to update, review and revise some practices and policies but to also use one centralised repository, already created, for all policies and procedures. With the support of the University Internal Communications Officer, it is planned to include more updates on any changes which impact on researchers in the both the monthly, staff e-zine, and quarterly, Ollscéala and Research Matters, newsletters which are issued to staff. A centralised FAQ section of the main NUI Galway website is also to be launched shortly which, it is hoped, will also improve internal communications to staff. The growth of multiple internal websites and intranets over the past few years, in addition to other forms of media has led to multiple sources of information which can be confusing for staff trying to source information quickly.

One of the biggest challenges facing management and principal investigators is empowering experienced researchers to take responsibility for their professional career development and equipping them with the appropriate skills. Although there are a variety of career supports available to researchers many do not avail of such supports. The situation is further complicated when linked to employment contract durations or turnover of research staff. It is planned to introduce a formal research career strategy which will apply to all experienced researchers and is hoped will help to streamline existing practices and provide experienced researchers with an increased variety of training/skills to facilitate their employment in industry and innovation in addition to academia. Research into the key training requirements or experienced researchers has already commenced and a proposal will be put before the research committee by end 2013.

Action plan

General

1.1 NUI Galway will continue to actively contribute, on a sectoral level, to the discussion on National Protocols and facilitate the implementation of the National Protocols for Research Integrity.

1.2 Review and update the University Ethics policy.

1.3 Introduce a Fraud and Corruption policy.

1.4 Update the university Code of Practice in Research.

1.5 Introduce new policies for Data Retention and Laboratory notebook.

1.6 Train all new supervisors in localised induction process.

1.7 Include training on Good Practice in Research during induction.

1.8 Store all policies in single repository on main university intranet.

1.9 Provide media training for researchers involved in public engagement activities.

Recruitment

2.1 Introduce a Research Career Strategy (RCS) to apply to all research staff. The strategy is planned to include the following but is not an exhaustive list. All academic, research and relevant administrative support areas will be included in the Research Careers Strategy project which is to be supported by the Vice President for Research.

    2.1.1 Incorporate probation policy

    2.1.2 Incorporate individual career development plans

    2.1.3 Define job descriptions using key competencies and to also include mobility experience

    2.1.4 Review current training courses on offer and explore additional options tailored to suit roles in addition to those in academia

    2.1.5 Introduce formalised annual performance management for experienced researchers within RCS

2.1.6 Explore the option of linking mentors from industry for experienced researchers on a more formalised basis

2.1.7 Enhance use of online training tools

2.1.8 Increase the amount of training workshops delivered by our Technology Transfer Office

2.1.9 Formalise the current practice of promotion to research fellow and senior research fellow

2.1.10 Agree an acceptable number of teaching hours for experienced researchers for the purpose of career development

2.1.11 Access to career advice to be formally incorporated into RCS

2.1.12 Clarify roles and responsibilities of supervisors/principal investigators

2.1.13 Include/strengthen value of mobility experience

2.1.14 Update and review induction procedures to include RCS when finalised.

2.2 Increase training for selection committees who serve on interview boards.

2.3 Introduce policy and training for use of audiovisual tools used for interview purposes.

2.4 Agree targets to achieve meaningful gender balance on assessment and selection panels and also key committees.

Working conditions and Social Security

Experienced researchers are recognised as employees of the university and as such have the same rights and access to all university services as other categories of employees.

3.1 Ensure all literature, including strategic plan, refers to staff as 'academic, research and support staff' as historically the practice had been to write 'academic and support staff'.

3.2 Consider the appointment of a Research Ombudsperson

3.3 Working with experienced researchers and academic staff introduce a research career strategy (as in section 2).

Training

The University will continue to offer a wide range of training opportunities to both early stage researchers and experienced researchers. Tailored training plans will eventually be incorporated into the research career strategy, which will apply to experienced researchers, when finalised. In addition the following will apply;

4.1   Increase mentor/mentee training

4.2   Ensure all supervisors are trained in localised induction process

4.3   Introduction of the following online modular training courses in early 2014

- o Managing your research career
- o The research grant process
- o Research collaboration
- o Managing a research team
- o Communicating your research

4.4   Deliver workshops on the above topics to help experienced researchers to realise their personal research goals.

Action plan timeline

Principle	Action	Responsible	Target completion date
1	NUIG will continue to actively contribute to the discussion on National Protocols and facilitate the implementation of the National Protocols for Research Integrity.	VP Research Office (VPR)	Ongoing
2	Review/update Ethics policy. Introduce Fraud & Corruption policy.	VPR	June 2014 Dec 2014
3	Update Research Code of Practice.	VPR	Sept 2014
4	Policy review – consider policy to include or reflect where applicant is a collaborator.	VPR	Mar 2015
5	Policy update – Code of practice (as in no. 3)	VPR	Sept 2014
6	New policy – Data Retention policy & Lab notebook policy. Single web repository for all policies.	VPR/Deans All offices	Dec 2014 Ongoing
7	Include training on Good Practice in Research during induction. Train all supervisors in induction.	HR/VPR HR	Mar 2014 Ongoing
8	No action required		
9	No action required		
10	No action required		
11	Research Career Strategy (RCS). Incorporate performance management into RCS.	HR/VPR	Nov 13 – Oct 15
12	No action required		
13	No action required		
14	Increase training for selection committees. Policy and training required for use of audiovisual tools used for interview purposes.	HR HR	Ongoing Mar 14
15	No action required		

16	Research career strategy. Define job descriptions and competencies for varying levels of researchers. Strengthen practice of promotion.	HR/VPR HR/VPR	Nov 13 – Oct 15 Jun 14
17	No action required		
18	Research career strategy. Improve links and access for industrial and research placements for researchers.	HR/VPR	Nov 13 – Oct 15
19	No action required		
20	No action required		
21	Research career strategy. Enhanced professional development opportunities.	HR/VPR	Nov 13 – Oct 15
22	Strengthen reference to researchers in University Strategic Plan and other publications as required.	Press Office/Presidents office	Jan 14 – Dec 14
23	No action required		
24	No action required		
25	No action required		
26	No action required		
27	Agree targets to achieve meaningful gender balance on assessment and selection panels and also key committees.		
28	Research career strategy	HR/VPR	Nov 13 – Oct 15
29	Mobility experience to be factored into research career strategy.	HR/VPR	Nov 13 – Oct 15
30	Access to career advice to be formally incorporated into the research career strategy.	HR/VPR	Nov 13 – Oct 15
31	Review lab note book policy.	VPR	Jun 14
32	Consider appointment of a research ombudsman. Update and revise the research Code of Practice.	VPR VPR	Dec 15 Sept 14
33	Agree an acceptable number of teaching hours for researchers. Should be incorporated into the research career strategy.	VPR/HR/Registrar/ College Deans/ researchers	Nov 13 – Oct 15
34	Increase Mediation training. Consider appointment of research ombudsman.	HR VPR	Ongoing Dec 15
35	No action required		
36	Research career strategy. Clarify roles and responsibilities of supervisors/PIs.	HR/VPR	Nov 13 – Oct 15
37	Research career strategy. Develop competency based job descriptions.	HR/VPR	Nov 13 – Oct 15
38	Research career strategy. Incorporate training using a variety of methods including online into RCS.	HR/VPR	Nov 13 – Oct 15
39	Research career strategy. Due to varying contract durations it is necessary to tailor the career development plans on an individual case by case basis. Staff will not be prevented from and will be encouraged to participate in training as part of their personal development.	HR/VPR	Nov 13 – Oct 15
40	No action required.		