

STRATEGY TO IMPLEMENT THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS (HRS4R).

THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAGA IS COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE CONDITIONS OF RESEARCHERS BY ADHERING TO THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR RESEARCHERS AND THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF RESEARCHERS AND BY INITIATING A PROCESS OF ANALYSIS AND IMPROVEMENT TO RECEIVE THE HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH, AWARDED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION. INTRODUCTION

On June 27th 2017, the University of Malaga has <u>formally adhered</u> to the <u>European Charter for Researchers</u> which, together with the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, are the European Union documents that set out the general principles and requirements that specify the functions, responsibilities and rights of researchers, as well as those of the institutions that hire them.

The <u>UMA's governing team considers it essential that our university be deeply involved at all levels in improving the conditions in which our researchers carry out their work.</u> For this reason, a working group has been set up, made up of the Vice-Rectors' Offices for Research and Transfer, the Vice-Rector's Office for Teaching and Research Staff and the Management, which will draw up an Action Plan to implement these principles and requirements in our university, under the auspices of the European Commission.

This process, which consists of several phases, will allow our university to obtain the "<a href="Human Resources Excellence in Research Award">Human Resources Excellence in Research Award</a>", a seal of excellence awarded by the European Commission to institutions that implement an action plan to align its practices with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The implementation process will be evaluates periodically by external experts.. Obtaining this seal will increase the visibility and confidence in the University of Málaga as a centre for attracting talent.

The implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers – HRS4R consist of 3 phases:

- 1. HR Policy Institution Internal Analysis in relation to the Charter and Code principles. Initial phase for the application for the HR Excellence in Research Award, which involves:
  - The endorsement of the Charter and the Code.
  - An internal analysis (GAP analysis)
  - The Open Transparent Merit-based Recruitment self-assessment (OTM-R checklist)
  - The design of an Initial Action Plan
- 2. Implementation phase of:
  - a) The Initial Action Plan (24 months, followed by an Interim Assessment)



- b) The Revised Action Plan (36 months after the interim assessment)
- 3. Award Renewal phase, involving a site visit five years after the initial grant of the HR Award.

# GAP ANALYSIS PROCESS: THE WORKING GROUP AND THE SUPERVISION COMMITTE

an internal Working Group was formed in the University of Málaga (UMA)to carry out our internal analysis and to define a 'Human Resources Strategy for Researchers' ('HRS4R'), . This internal working group was set up in october 2017 as an initiative from the Vice-Rectorate for Research. This group consisted of the main stakeholders in the process:

Teaching and Research Personnel from several involved Vice-Rectorates:

- Rector
- Vice-rectorate for Research and Teaching Staff
- Vice-rectorate for Research and Transfer.
- Chief management
- Deputy Vice-rectorate for Research and Teaching Staff
- Deputy Vice-rectorate for Research
- Deputy Vice-rectorate for Transfer Office

#### Administrative staff

- 2 Representative of the Vice-Rectorate for Research and Transfer
- 2 Representative of management (economics and quality)

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The aims of the working group were:

- To analyse the current status of the implementation of the Charter & Code at UMA, based on their forty principles and the current legislation at European, national, regional and institutional levels.
- To elaborate a proposal for a Human Resources Strategy to be presented to the UMA Governing Team and subsequently to the European Commission.

The established Working Procedure was as follows:

- Detailed analysis the forty principles of the Charter and the Code in various meetings.
- Definition of the points for analysis.
- Identification of the available resources and assessment of strengths and weaknesses.



- Identification the types of initiatives to be undertaken and their level of priority.
- Interactions with other Services/Units within the UMA and projects already underway.
- Preparation of a HRS4R document to be presented to the Governing Board for approval.

We intend that this effort to adapt our conditions to the European guidelines has the maximum participation and consensus of the university community members. For this reason, we have opened this web page with a <u>suggestions box</u> so that any person or member of the university community can make any suggestions for improvement they consider appropriate on these issues.

This committee has been working, in a first phase, to gather the information from our interest groups related to research, holding 6 working meetings.

This committee's work consisted of:

- 1. Questionnaire survey
- 2. Strategy design
- 3. Design of the action plan

#### Survey:

The questionnaire addressed to UMA researchers was sent by email in November, 2017. It was anonymously answered until 22th December 2017, and it allowed us to understand the current state and perception of the UMA HR policies and practices regarding the C&C principles and detect our the strengths and weaknesses.

The Survey was filled out online. It was sent to 2209 UMA Researchers from 69 UMA Departments of all 17 UMA Faculties/Schools. The sample was a representative selection of staff involved in research, including Teaching and Research Staff with a PhD (Full Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors), post-doctoral personnel (Ramón y Cajal and Juan de la Cierva), pre-doctoral personnel (FPI and FPU fellows) and Administrative Staff. The overall participation rate was 15 %. Results are shown in the Annex 1.

#### Strategy design

The gap analysis showed that most of the principles put forward in the Charter&Code have already been largely put into practice within the UMA. However, the UMA has also identified a number of aspects for which there is needed improvement, and has also elaborated an Action Plan to address the detected gaps.

# Design of the action plan

According to the results of the survey and our internal analysis, the Action Plan will be implemented gradually in the next two years (July 2021-June 2023). Nevertheless, he



different Vice-rectorates, Units and Offices of the University of Málaga involved in the implementation of the HR Strategy, have already started some preparatory actions. The actions proposed have been selected and defined to tackle the main weaknesses identified from the GAP Analysis, to contribute to the improvement of the institutional practices in HR in research, as well as to increase the awareness of researchers at all career stages about them. Some of the actions involve improvement and dissemination of already existing procedures and protocols, so they will be addressed at the beginning of the implementation period, followed by the ones requiring setting up new actions.

As a general conclusion, UMA commits itself to put into practice the attached action plan within the next two years (from mid-2021 to mid2023) and develop the required internal review protocols to monitor its progress.

All relevant information regarding HRS4R will be accessible at https://www.uma.es/calidad/cms/menu/hrs4r/

ACTION PLAN based on the analysis performed by the Working Group ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS.

#### STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

## - Strengths:

Being a public law organization, the university is strongly bound by national and regional regulations concerning most aspects of the ethical and professional principles of the Charter and the Code, especially research freedom, professional attitude, contractual and legal obligations, accountability, non-discrimination and evaluation systems. These principles are deeply rooted in the university structure, regulations and procedures.

Therefore, for these as well as for the rest of principles regarding ethical and professional aspects, the university has already developed fully operational structures to support researchers in their academic and research activities, to ensure they adhere to standard ethical and professional principles, and to protect them against situations where equal opportunities may be undermined:

- The ethics committee, ethics code and protocol on academic ethics of the University of Málaga set a clear framework for ethical research.
- The appropriate management of Intellectual property rights and copyright, and activities for the exploitation, dissemination and communication of research results are promoted and guided by dedicated support units and internal regulations.
- A Vice-rectorate for equality, diversity and social action, along with the university ombudsman and the policies for gender equality, provide a safe environment to ensure equal opportunities and provide mechanisms to overcome disability and discrimination.
- The health and safety at work are fully supported by a dedicated service.

#### - Weakness:

The main weaknesses detected for this set of principles are derived from a lack of knowledge about specific procedures or activities among the research community. It has been especially noted for those activities that have increased their relevance in recent years in the research career and in the implementation of research projects. For example, ethical



requirements of research funding programs are becoming more important at proposal stage, but researchers do not always know how to identify or properly deal with all the ethics aspects of their projects. It is also important to provide tools to help researchers ensure research integrity. Likewise, open access for publications and research data is the recommended, or even mandatory practice, but not all researchers are aware of the best mechanisms to fulfill these requirements.

Another weakness that we have identified in our GAP analysis is the limited perception of the options and activities for science communication, even though there are several mechanisms in place for that. This could be indicating that the type or the approach of the communication activities might not be adequate to attract and engage researchers in them.

## 2. SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT

#### **STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

# - Strengths:

The university regulatory framework is strongly determined by the national regulations and substantially aligned with the code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers, so for the research positions at the Spanish public universities, the selection and recruitment processes meet most of the principles analysed under this section.

This applies especially for researchers R3 and R4 applying for research and teaching staff positions funded under the university staff budget line. These may include junior non-permanent positions, as well as long term and senior professor positions (mainly R3 and R4).

The recruitment of R1 and R2 researchers is supported by a wide range of funding sources, such as regional, national or European fellowship programmes with selection process carried out by external organisms. The rest of R1 and R2 researchers, and specially R1 researchers, are appointed either through research projects funded by private or public entities (regional, national or international), or by the UMA Programme for Research, Training and Science Communication. UMA has its own regulation in place for the selection and recruitment processes of these researchers, which is overall aligned with the main principles of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

#### - Weaknesses:

The strong regulatory framework for the recruitment of researchers at the university is a constraining factor to make major changes in the internal regulations.

However, we have detected that the information about the selection and recruitment processes is fragmented: there are different processes and requirements defined for different career stages (R1-R4), and these processes are managed by different management units. While the Vice-rectorate for Research and Teaching Staff implements the selection and recruitment process of academic faculty members (mainly R3 and R4), the Vice-rectorate for Research and Transfer manages the recruitment of researchers supported by external grants or fellowships, by research projects, R&D contracts, and by their own Programme for Research, Transfer and Science Communication. This situation prevents researchers from having a clear overview of the career path options and the OTM-R principles underlying all the selection and recruitment procedures, which affects to



candidates applying for research positions, and also to the university research staff recruiting personnel.

From the management point of view, we noticed a different level of implementation of the electronic tools to organise and participate in the competitive open positions.

#### 3. WORKING CONDITIONS

#### **STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

#### - Strengths:

The new Statutes of the University of Málaga, approved in 2019, has allowed the university to adapt its structure and governance not only to integrate the new regulatory framework of the Spanish Science and Technology System, but also to respond to the new challenges of higher education and research, development and innovation activity. One of the most significant changes with regards to the research career is the recognition of the researcher condition to all the staff carrying out research activity, regardless of their appointment conditions or whether their contracts are fixed-term or permanent. This change is especially relevant for researchers in the first stages of their research careers, with fixed-term contracts funded by research projects and fellowships, as it allows them to access training and teaching activities previously restricted to long-term or permanent research staff. The Statutes also provide elements to protect the freedom and rights of the research community, such as the ombudsman office and the presence of researchers in the governing bodies.

Further to this, the university has developed numerous initiatives and mechanisms to improve the working conditions and the overall research environment, such as the research infrastructure portfolio, the internal regulation on IPR management, the institutional equality plan, the research support services or the health and work risk prevention services. There is also a continuous training programme for research and teaching staff fostering career development and the exchange of ideas.

#### - Weaknesses:

Despite the available services and sources information that the university provides, we have identified these main weaknesses:

- There is not a specific repository or guideline to support the integration of new and visiting researchers in the university. Even if the information is available, it usually takes time to learn about the specific procedures of the university and the available facilities and services. Currently, there is a "Welcome to UMA" office, but it is focus on international mobility of students.
- The university does not have dedicated units or services for career advice, which may hinder the capacity of young researchers to plan their research and training activities effectively, with potential to improve their future career prospects in research.
- The training opportunities to support the research career are mainly focused on its initial stages, as most training courses are organised by the doctoral school and because the courses of the training programme for research and teaching staff are



more relevant for junior than for consolidated or senior researchers. Therefore, to improve the support for career development, the research training plan needs a more comprehensive approach including activities relevant for researchers with different levels of experience.

 Researchers at different career stages acknowledge limited knowledge about the IPR they are entitled to as UMA employees and especially when IPR arise in collaborative research, or about the most appropriate mechanisms for the exploitation of results.

# **4. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

#### STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

#### - Strengths:

The University of Málaga, as an academic institution awarding doctoral degrees, has extended experience in the implementation of PhD studies in Doctoral quality programmes recognised by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, its processes are aligned with the national regulations and has a Quality Assurance System in place to ensure that all the doctoral programmes meet the minimum quality requirements. All the regulations and best practices for the supervision of PhD students are publicly available at the website, and clearly establish the roles and responsibilities of all the actors involved in a PhD, including detailed monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The Doctoral Schools also provide the possibility of International and double degrees, which contributes to the wider recognition of the PhD and the creation of international collaborations.

#### - Weakness:

The main weaknesses identified regarding the training and development of researchers are related to the scope of the training activities available at UMA. After the PhD studies, the Training Programme of Research and Teaching Staff is the main source of training in subjects other than the technical scientific training obtained in the research laboratories or departments (conference attendance, technical courses, hands-on training, etc.). This programme has a dedicated section for research-related training, but the actions proposed are actually interesting during the initial stages of the research career and not appealing for more senior profiles. Therefore, the training programme for research need a more comprehensive approach including activities for professional development and evolution throughout all the stages of the research career. The detected research needs include training on subjects supporting the research activity, but also with regards to professional relationships with supervisors as well as in extended networks.

Proposed action	GAP Principles	Timing least year's	(at by	Responsib le Unit	Indicators/Targ ets
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Action 1. Organisation of workshops in different university centres about the functions and procedures of the UMA Ethics Committee. If appropriate, workshops will be adapted to ethical issues in specific disciplines.	See table below.	Q4 2021 Q4 2022	Vice-rector ate for Research and Transfer – Ethics Committee	2 workshops (one workshop per year)
Action 2. Analysis of anti-plagiarism software or tools that could be offered to the research community to extend its use beyond the teaching activities through the virtual classroom. This action will follow the following steps:  - Analysis of the existing tools/software with the support of the IT services of the university.  - Identification of the most appropriate tools and technical conditions for their implementation (technical and license aspects).  - Implementation of the software, if appropriate for the intended purposes.	See table below.	Q4 2021 – Q1 2022	Vice-rector ate for Research and Transfer Central IT services. The university library services.	<ul> <li>Appropriate plagiarism tools identified.</li> <li>Assessment of technical implementati on.</li> <li>If feasible: anti-plagiaris m software available for researchers.</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Action 3. Resources for Open Access.</li> <li>The microsite for Open Access will be improved to facilitate the publication in open access of the research results. This action involves: <ul> <li>Providing information to identify the most appropriate open access journals per discipline to promote green Open Access.</li> <li>Providing information on the paper version that can be published in the institutional repository (RIUMA).</li> <li>Analysis of potential institutional agreements with publishers to reduce the cost of the APC fees born by researchers.</li> <li>Extension of the Open Access repository to research data.</li> <li>Organisation of a workshop on open science.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	See table below.	Q3 2021 - Q2 2022	Vice-rector ate for Research and Transfer Central IT services, The University library services	- Open access website at www.uma.es updated with the new tools for open access Open research data repository launched One workshop on Open Science.
Action 4. Analysis of the participation of researchers at different stages of their	See table below.	Q3 2021 – Q4 2022	Vice-rector ate for	Report on participation of



research careers in science communication and public engagement activities, with the purpose of identifying potential gaps in the type of actions, communication channels or target audiences that could be supported by the university services to increase the involvement in these activities.			Research and Transfer - Publication and Disseminati on Services.	UMA researchers in science communication activities.
Action 5. Develop the "OTM-R guidelines" as a comprehensive guide describing:  - The university OMT-R policy.  - The processes and requirements for all types of researcher positions at the university.  The guidelines will be published both in Spanish and English in the UMA website, and it will be linked in the HRS4R site.	See table below.	Q3 2021 - Q4 2021	Vice-rector ate for Research and Teaching Staff  Vice-rector ate for Research and Transfer	- OTM-R guidelines published on the website.
Action 6. Dissemination of the OTM-R guidelines.  - Advertisement of the OTM-R guidelines with the support of the communication department of the University via the University news and the internal communication channels of the Vice-rectorates involved.  - Development of dissemination and training material about OTM-R practices to raise awareness among the research community and managerial staff. They will be designed to be easily accessible and attractive, and may include digital fact sheets, brochures, infographics, etc.  - Publication and internal communication of the dissemination and training material will be presented in Spanish and English.	See table below.	Q4 2021 – Q1 2022	Vice-rector ate for Research and Teaching Staff Vice-rector ate for Research and Transfer Information and communica tion service	Dissemination and training material available on the website.  Communication campaign consisting in, at least:  - 2 pieces of news on the UMA website.  - 4 institutional dissemination e-mails.

Action 7 Implementation of the e-administration in all the researcher recruitment processes.	See table below.	Q3 2021 – Q2 2022	Vice-rector ate for Research and Teaching Staff  Vice-rector ate for Research and Transfer  Central IT Services  General Secretary	Fully operational e-administration tools for all researcher recruitment processes.
Action 8. Integration of the OMT-R processes into the Quality Assurance System of the University of Malaga to monitor the implementation of the HRS4R actions related to them.	See table below	Q3 2021 – Q4 2023	Vice-rector ate for quality assurance, strategic planning, and social responsibili ty services  Vice-rector ate for Research and Teaching Staff  Vice-rector ate for Research and Transfer	OTM-R practices and HRS4R Action plan integrated in the Quality Assurance Plan of the University.

Action 9. The creation of the guide "Welcome to UMA" to support the effective integration of incoming researchers in the university. It will include reference information to facilitate personal and professional incoming mobility of researchers.	See table below.	Q1 2022 – Q4 2022	Vice-rector ate for research and teaching staff.  Vice-rector ate for Research and Transfer.  Vice-rector ate for mobility and internationa I cooperation	Guide "Welcome to UMA" published on the UMA Website.
Action 10. Research career website: All relevant information on career paths and professional development opportunities in research will be gathered in this website.	See table below.	Q1 2022 – Q4 2022	Vice-rector ate for research and teaching staff.  Vice-rector ate for Research and Transfer.  Vice-rector ate for Entreprene urship and Social Innovation  Doctoral School	"RESEARCH CAREER" website launched. One Presentation event



Action 11. Informative sessions about the implementation of the of intellectual property rights regulations at UMA.	See table below.	Q3 2021 – Q2 2023	Vice-rector ate for Research and Transfer. Technology Transfer Office	2 informative sessions (one per year).
Action 12. Creation of a portfolio of training activities transferrable skills common to all research fields and attractive to researchers at all career stages. These actions would be integrated in the Training Programme for Research and Teaching Staff.  Training on transferable skills will include transversal training contributing to competence development and improvement of career prospects in research. Some examples are research management, grant writing, IPR management, Open Science, entrepreneurship, communication, etc.	See table below.	Q4 2021 – Q2 2023	Vice-rector ate for teaching staff.  Vice-rector ate for University Studies.  Vice-rector ate for quality assurance, strategic planning, and social responsibili ty services.  Vice-rector ate for Social Innovation and Entreprene urship.	6 new training actions on transferable skills integrated in the research section of the Training programme for Research and Teaching Staff. (approx. 25% increase).
Action 13. Introduction of training activities on supervision and networking in the Training Programme for Research and Teaching Staff.  These training actions will provide researchers with new techniques for efficient supervision and progress monitoring, for effective communication	See table below.	Q4 2021 – Q2 2023	Vice-rector ate for research and teaching staff.  Vice-rector ate for	2 new training actions on supervision and networking integrated in the Training programme for Research and Teaching Staff



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# **Implementation**

The implementation of these improvement actions will be coordinated by a technical committee led by the Vice-Rector's Office for Research and Transfer with the close collaboration of the other Vice-Rectors and management.

This technical work team is made up of:

# Teaching and research staff from the different vice-rectorates involved:

Vice-Rector for Research and Teaching Staff

Deputy Vice-rectorate for Research and Teaching Staff

Deputy Vice-rectorate for Research and Transfer

Deputy Vice-rectorate for Transfer Office

# Researchers at different stages:

2 pre-doctoral staff representatives

2 representatives of the postdoctoral staff: One researcher "Juan de la Cierva" and one "Ramón y Cajal"

1 Senior Researcher Representative: University Professor

#### Administrative staff

- 2 Representative of the Vice-Rectorate for Research and Transfer
- 2 Representative of management (economics and quality)



The working group reports at all times to the general committee, made up of the Rector's team (Rector, Vice-Rectors and General Manager). This team will meet quarterly to review progress on the measures to be implemented.

At each meeting, the state of progress of the different actions will be assessed and updated, and the next activities will be planned.