



HR Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R): Self-assessment and update to Action Plan

Background

In September 2012, Tampere University of Technology (TUT) issued its Declaration of Commitment to the Principles of the European Commission's European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. In October 2012, TUT was selected to join the 4th Cohort of the European Commission 'Institutional HR Strategy Group.' In April 2014, the European Commission granted TUT an 'HR Excellence in Research' award in recognition of the development activities related to research careers and the position of researchers at the University. Following the HRS4R process, the first self-evaluation was conducted in April 2016.

Implementation of self-assessment

TUT implemented the HRS4R self-assessment in two parts. First, the HRS4R working group reviewed the TUT Action Plan in its entirety and checked which measures had already been completed, which would be further continued and which would be discontinued in future (see Appendix 1). After this, a group consisting of researchers discussed the aspects they felt TUT should pay special attention to going forward in its HRS4R activities.

Self-assessment results and update to Action Plan

According to the results from the HRS4R self-assessment of Tampere University of Technology (TUT), the University has taken several measures in an effort to improve researchers' working conditions and recruitment. Significant improvements have taken place in the different sub-areas. Some of the measures are recurring and form an integral part of the continuous improvement of operations.

The practices applied by the University's units still vary to an extent, however, which results in inequality between TUT's researchers. The aim is to guarantee equal working conditions for all employees, regardless of the unit they work in. Steps have been taken to mend this discrepancy by, for example, finding ways to disseminate best practices. Also, there are many issues for which guidelines and policies have been made available, but they are not necessarily followed to an equal extent in all units. Going forward, special attention will therefore be paid to communications on guidelines.

The development of leadership and supervisory work has been and will continue to be a key tool for reducing the variation between units as regards researchers' working conditions. TUT is about to undergo a significant organizational change in which the current small performance units, i.e. the departments, will cease to exist at the beginning of 2017. The faculties will assume responsibility over the operations within their entire unit. The process also involves recruiting full-time managers for the faculties. It is likely that this transition will also affect several development targets listed in the self-assessment.

From the beginning of 2018 onwards, TUT will form an all-new higher education institution together with the University of Tampere and Tampere University of Applied Sciences. This also means that the other two educational establishments will join in and collaborate with TUT as regards the HRS4R process and the planned development measures. The practical forms and schedules for this prospective collaboration are difficult to predict at this stage, however.

The single most important indicator of the actions listed will be a staff survey. The survey will also allow comparisons between the results from the different units. The aim is to have the results draw nearer each other, towards the highest rated unit.



Appendix 1. Self-assessment of the Action Plan. If there is no note of continued action regarding a specific self-assessment item, the action is considered completed. The development work in the sub-areas is nonetheless continued as presented in the results of the self-assessment.

Principle	Actions in the 2014 Action Plan	Self-assessment 2016
Professional responsibility/attitude	TUT will encourage the dissemination of good practices among researchers. The Science Council will prepare a plan of action.	The roadmap for research has been completed, and the Science Council checks the status of the plan on a regular basis. In future, open science and research data will be used as the basis for maintaining and improving this principle at TUT.
Ethics	Training on research ethics, e.g. Ethics Day	Training at regular intervals: Ethics seminars organized twice a year.
Ethics	TUT will systematically disseminate information on the existing policies related to research ethics and good scientific practice.	Ethical instructions distributed to all professors. A national ethics course for PhD students will be started in 2016.
Good practices for health and safety	Occupational healthcare services will be extended to cover employees who are on a scholarship-based leave	Instructions on the process are available on the intranet. Applications have been received as expected.
Recruitment*	TUT will ensure the clarity and transparency of its recruitment criteria, e.g. by organizing recruitment-related training and evaluating researchers' portfolio requirements	Examples of measures taken: Recruitment training is organized regularly for both HR staff and supervisors as a part of the permanent training portfolio. The portfolio requirements have been updated and made available on the tut.fi website http://www.tut.fi/en/about-tut/careers-at-tut/attachments-to-applications/index.htm .
Recruitment*	TUT will develop its recruitment processes (better use of international recruitment channels and enhanced instructions for e.g. tenure track positions)	Examples of measures taken: Euraxess, Academic Positions and LinkedIn are used in recruitment. The general instructions have been updated and polished, especially for tenure track positions: http://www.tut.fi/en/about-tut/careers-at-tut/tenure-track/index.htm
Recruitment*	TUT will develop its recruitment-related communications (letters, documentation of decisions, job advertisements)	Examples of measures taken: Both internal and external websites have been developed. For tenure track positions, announcement templates are applied. With all announcements, HR professionals are in charge of both the contents and the quality.
Recruitment*	TUT will place emphasis on gender balance and address gaps in employment due to family leave	Postponed (until 2018 at least)**
Recognition of mobility	TUT will encourage researchers to seek international exposure throughout their career	Processes, guidelines and responsibilities have been systemized.



Development of TUT's career systems	TUT will create explicit descriptions and instructions that apply to different career stages, especially the postdoctoral stage	The guidelines are in process. To be continued as an action.
Stability and continuity of employment	TUT will identify ways to extend the periods of fixed-term employment contracts or the number of permanent contracts	Instructions on contract lengths are available. HR specialists are involved in the recruitment phase.
Work culture	TUT will continue to develop the training it provides to supervisors on how to lead a team and an organization	The supervisor training path is available to all supervisors, whether new or experienced.
Research identity	TUT will develop its career coaching services and offer personal development training for researchers	Career coaching groups are organized systematically for PhD students. Personal development training is a part of the training portfolio.
Supervision	TUT will prepare a supervision agreement template	A draft of the agreement has been prepared, but it is yet to be adopted. PhD students' satisfaction with their supervision is followed upon systematically, and the results are submitted to the Academic Board for processing.
Supervision	TUT will launch a new coaching/training programme on supervisory skills	The pedagogical training provided by TUT covers different supervisory themes. The planning for a new module focusing fully on supervision has also been initiated in spring 2016. Implementation has been scheduled for spring 2017.
Supervision	TUT will launch a mentor programme for young researchers	The programme is currently at the planning phase. To be continued as an action.
Internal cooperation and communication	TUT will organize events that promote networking and the dissemination of best practices among researchers	Several events are organized every year, and the activities are systematic.
Internal cooperation and communication	TUT will improve the visibility of research groups through internal and external websites	The TUTCRIS research portal has been opened at http://tutcris.tut.fi/portal/ , providing information on approx. 1,300 researchers (1 April 2016).
Support for seeking funding and projects	TUT will improve its existing guidelines, training and working groups	Guidelines and systematic training have been made available.

*The assessment of the development in recruitment-related actions has been completed with the OTM-R template.

** At TUT, gender equality is a topic that is found particularly important and also highly challenging, as engineering is a famously male-dominated field. We will exclude this area as a separate action for now, as we would like to take the time to really find ways to make an impact on a larger scale, e.g. in the light of the new higher education institution to be established between TUT, the University of Tampere and Tampere University of Applied Sciences. Attention is continuously being paid to this question, however, and one of the goals of TUT's recruitment activities is, in fact, to also encourage women to apply as researchers.