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euraxess RESEARCHERS IN MOTION

hr HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Interim Assessment

Human Resources Strategy for Researchers

24th July 2021

Internal Review

Case number:	2018ES324070
Name Organisation under review:	Universidad de Salamanca
Organisation's contact details:	📞 +34 923 29 44 00 #1270
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Contents

1. Organisational Information

Please provide an update of the key figures for your organisation. Figures marked * are compulsory.

Staff & students	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research *	2.300
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality) *	55
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation) *	300
Of whom are women *	1058
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor. *	1.067
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level *	348
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level *	188
Total number of students (if relevant) *	27.902
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff) *	3.117

Research funding (figures for most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organisational budget	236.240.904
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	64.980.765
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	16.651.483
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	2.734.698

Organizational profile

(a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)

Being founded in 1218, the University of Salamanca is one of the three oldest universities in Europe, accumulating 800 years of history, boasting a wide range of Faculties and Research Institutes in Sciences and Arts, which places it as one of the leading institutions both in basic and translational research in Spain, Europe and worldwide. In 2011, it was awarded the Campus of International Excellence status. The University of Salamanca provides a well suited academic and research atmosphere to close to 25.500 student/year (both undergraduate and postgraduate), and more than 1.700 researches (plus 800 Associate Professors) distributed in 64 University Departments, 16 Faculties and Schools, 10 Universities Schools, 12 Institutes, as well as several Research Units which cover Social, Biomedical, Art, Experimental and Formal Sciences. All the human resources, the characteristics of its facilities and the availability of state-of-the-art instrumental equipment guarantee a vast scientific and technologic production activities and a continuous offer of scientific dissemination to the Society

2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Please review the strengths and weaknesses under the four thematic areas of the Charter and Code, as provided by your organisation in the initial assessment phase. When doing so, you should do not only look back, but also consider new priorities, strategic decisions, etc. which may further influence the Action Plan. Please also provide a brief commentary in the "Remarks" column if major changes have occurred versus the initial plan.

Ethical and professional aspects

Strengths and weaknesses (max. 500 words)

Strenghts

Research freedom: In 2020, USAL approved its new strategic plan for the period 2020-2023, confirming teachers and students´ freedom to research and pursue transfer of knowledge without unreasonable interference or restriction from law, institutional regulations, or public pressure.

Ethics: In 2020, USAL appointed a Data Protection Delegate as responsible for ensuring that the processes for managing the personal data of its staff or collected in research projects comply with the applicable data protection regulations.

Equality: USAL Equality Unit has improved its website to reach a greater number of users and make the information more accessible. During this year, the Equality Unit has launched the first edition of Prize for Excellence. This Prize will be awarded to the best PhD dissertation and the best Bachelor and Master's Degrees thesis in gender and equality subject matters.

Intellectual property: In this period, USAL organized more than 15 IP training courses.
In the framework of the USAL Transfer Knowledge University-Business Project, it has been organized different calls for proposals and prizes aimed at students and teachers, focus on strengthening IP. These calls have funded more than 200 IP initiatives.
USAL encouraged the participation of its researchers in the first National call for evaluation of "recognition of a six-year period of knowledge transfer" and more than 650 proposals were presented to this call by the USAL researchers.

Project management: In 2021, USAL's own funding programs have included a novel call for funding technical staff to support the management of research projects. This call has enabled to hire 15 project managers who will work directly with the researcher groups offering support in the tasks related to the project management.

Work environment: Due to the pandemic situation, the work environment has been radically modified since telework has been the main way to work at the University. For that reason, the IT services has been reinforced to provide more security and to avoid IT threats.

Outreach: Due to the COVID situation, most of the outreach activities at USAL have been successfully virtually organized.
Gredos repository has become into the USAL Open Access Repository that allows free and instant access to USAL research documents.

Weaknesses

Ethics: In order to overcome the potential misunderstanding, the USAL Ethics Committee is in the process of reviewing its internal regulation to ensure the correct compliance of ethical legislations in all kind of projects. The nomination of this Committee will be modified to "Research Ethical Committee at USAL", which will encompass all study fields.

Equality: The USAL Gender Equality Unit is reviewing and updating its Gender Plan to guarantee equality in the university community and will adopt measures to prevent or eradicate any discrimination.

Work environment: A new Manual for Good Research Practices has been published at the Research portal. This manual tackles most of the issues reflected in the GAP analysis.

Outreach: *Eventum* platform has been implemented. This is an events management system, in which different activities which are sorted by categories of interest/fields of research.

Remarks (max 500 words)

Regarding the proposed actions for the USAL´s Bioethical Committee, it is clear that there is a delay in the envisaged timetable and unfortunately, the actions foreseen will not be finished on time. This delay is due in part to the pandemic situation that has impeded the progress of the process and also to internal changes

Nevertheless, initial main changes in Committee composition and principles have been tackled and it is foreseen that the renewal of the internal regulations of the Committee and the modification of its nomination will be completed by the beginning of the new academic year.

After its internal approval, the renewed Ethics Committee for Research will be presented to the University community by means of:

▸ Publication on the HR award website
▸ Corrections and further information about the Committee in the Welcome manual.
▸ References to it in the Manual for Good Research Practices.
▸ Publication on the Research Unit web page with its corresponding English translation of the internal procedures for obtaining the ethical review of the ethical implications of researchers´ projects.

In relation to Equality actions implemented by USAL, it is highlighted that the University has reinforced its pioneering Equality Unit with delegates on its different campuses. The creation of this network promotes an institutional culture against inequalities, and consequently, has contribute to address twenty cases reported by the University community, including two of gender violence, throughout this year.

Related to the work environment, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, USAL, as well as all worldwide Universities, faced with an unprecedented situation to continue guaranteeing services to the University staff and to ensure the welfare of the entire university community. From the Risk Prevention Unit of the USAL, several courses related to health and wellness have been organized for all University staff.

With regard to outreach, it is also remarkable that in 2021 USAL has launched a novel portal conceived for collecting USAL researchers´ scientific production. The main goal is to contribute to the improvement of research outreach, facilitate access and foster the impact and visibility of research outcomes developed at USAL, and therefore, scientific communication.

Besides that, in 2020 the Publication Service at USAL, "*Ediciones Salamanca*" has been spreads knowledge by means of a wide and diverse open access catalogue, allowing consultation and free download without inscription. It is the only institutional body in charge of the edition, outreach and trade of books, magazines and any other editorial product made by University of Salamanca. Its mission is to publish the knowledge generated in the scientific and university field, at both national and international level, as well as to promote edition and dissemination of contents intended for teaching, outreach and research, according to the needs of society. It serves as a channel for a good scientific production, regardless of the professional category of authors and their university affiliation. All of this with full respect for copyright.

Recruitment and selection

Strengths and Weaknesses (max 500 words)

Strengths

Recruitment: As reflected in the initial assessment phase, recruitment of R3 and R4 researchers depends on the budget of the regional government and it is controlled by national legislation, while recruitment of R1 and R2 researchers depends on the funding institution. In this regard, it should be noted that USAL has been awarded with a COFUND project (MSCA). As main project output, this project will involve the recruitment of 40 postdoctoral researchers for a period of 30 months. Related to its management, the process of selection of best candidates will follow the H2020 guidelines of open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment. Each candidate proposal will be evaluated by three international experts (from academic and non-academic sectors).

Mobility: Information concerning mobility of researchers is included in the newly developed "Welcome Manual for Researchers" that will be progressively improved/refined/updated. Moreover, SPIO organizes a Welcome Fair for newcomers every year. As this was not possible in 2020 due to the coronavirus outbreak, the face-to-face Fair was substituted by audiovisual materials. Welcome videos and brochures with USAL Services descriptions were released by the Vice Rectorate of International Relations. Besides that, SPIO in collaboration with the Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer have been planning a Welcome event that has been postponed to academic year 2021/2022.

Weaknesses

Scales: in the selection processes dependent of USAL, for example, for positions funded by research projects scales have changed and parameters concerning to practical experience, linguistic and digital skills are being included. Moreover, this issue has been improved in the new OTM-R procedures described below.

USAL's job portal: The new procedure for international candidates to have access to the portal is in stand-by due to a reduction of the IT staff. Even though, it is expected that it will be available in Autumn 2021.

Talent attraction: Dissemination of job offers in international portals, such as EURAXESS, is being performed but USAL aspires to increase its visibility. If it is possible, it is planned to extend this information to other international portals such as *Scientific Careers, FindaPhD, FindaPostdoc*, etc. For instance, in the framework of the project "USAL4EXCELLENCE" the 40 postdoctoral positions will be advertised on the aforementioned websites to reach as many international candidates as possible. Moreover, new documents in English will be available to facilitate application procedure for potential candidates. The approach of the issue is upon study by the OTM-R Working group and the units and stakeholders involved.

Selection committees: A new regulation has been established regarding the number of experts who compose the selection committees devoted to temporary positions, now it is mandatory to have 3 experts whereas in the past the IP of the project could select the candidate by his/her own means. In spite of this advancement, the Gender Equality Unit has not yet addressed this issue, but it is currently in the process of reviewing USAL´s Gender Plan, in which the balanced composition of selection committees will be addressed.

Recruitment and selection

Remarks (max 500 words)

As a result of the USAL´s determination in the quest for talent attraction, a major achievement must be highlighted: USAL4EXCELLENCE project has been granted in the MSCA-COFUND 2020 Call. In the framework of this project a total of 40 researchers will be recruited over the next 5 years. The aim of this project is to attract brilliant international researchers to the University to develop bottom-up research projects.

The University of Salamanca, through the OTM-R working group, is in the process of improving and redefining the selection procedures for research staff. This has already been reflected in decisions such as the inclusion of other, not exclusively scientific, parameters in the selection scales, as well as the regulations regarding the members of the evaluation committees.

With regards to the participation of international researchers in the selection processes, new procedures are being implemented to improve open access to USAL's job platform.

USAL is making efforts to hire postdoctoral researchers. Proof of this is the USAL's own Postdoctoral Program (II). This program finances grants for the training and specialization of human resources in R+D+i via Recognized Research Groups (GIR) through the hiring of 16 full-time postdoctoral researchers for a period of one year, extendable for another. The objective is to incorporate researchers with proven scientific capacity to the University of Salamanca to strengthen and promote research lines, scientific collaborations, and participation in competitive research projects.

It should be noted that the Vice Rectors for Teaching Staff and Research and Knowledge Transfer have recently changed, and the new Vice Rector are adapting and familiarizing themselves with the HR4SR implementation Action Plan

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Working conditions

Strengths and Weaknesses (max 500 words)

Strengths

Facilities: Because of the COVID19 outbreak, IT services have had a new priority which was strengthening the tools for teleworking throughout USAL´s Departments, Units and Services. This subject will also be addressed for the next academic year, as it is intended to ensure compliance with the Royal Decree-law 28/2020, 22 of September, on Remote Work.

Stabilization: Within the framework of Orden UNI/551/2021, USAL has published the call "Grants for the Requalification of Spanish University System 2021-2023". This call includes three modalities of grants: 1) training of young researchers; 2) requalification of official or contracted university teaching staff and; 3) attraction of international talent.
In relation to the stabilization of interim personnel, Royal Decree-Law 14/2021, of July 6, 2021, on urgent measures to reduce the temporary nature of public employment, was approved in July 2021. This law also supports the processes of stabilization of temporary employment of research personnel.

Teaching: *Docentia* software, used by students to evaluate teaching abilities and performance, has been updated and improved. Also, the Virtual Campus "*Studium*" has been improved.

Work conditions: USAL provides PDI with working time flexibility and norms that offer the possibility of enabling partial working hours for R2 researchers. This is a practice that has been in place for some time and will be promoted even beyond the current conditions and rules. Teleworking has been allowed during the pandemic period.

Complaints: Further arrangements to increase researchers´ awareness, confidence and use of these mechanisms (Ombudsman and Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer as mediators), as well as other Guardianship bodies will be discussed for the following stage of implementation of the Action Plan. The Ombudsman figure is included in the Welcome Manual for Researchers.

Weaknesses

Facilities and equipment: Although during this period USAL has stabilized the technical staff with permanent positions and has reinforced these services with other temporary positions to decrease the lack of human resources in this area, USAL must still work on that at a greater extent.

Salaries: The differences in the salaries of similar professional profiles and within the same profile with respect to other universities have been offset by the salary increase applied to R2 researchers to bridge the gap between similar professional profiles at USAL.

Intellectual Property: The lack of information about matters concerning IP and patenting has been amended by bringing together USAL´s information and norms along with national legislation on the same website. It is expected that this initiative will solve initial researchers' questions. Nevertheless, and stemming from the biennial survey, improvements of the website and information spreading are still needed in order to reach a greater number of researchers.

Teaching and work-life balance: USAL has published information on the possibilities and tools offered by teleworking. Nevertheless, clearer procedures and further information should be provided to researchers in this respect. USAL has to observe new legislation to progressively adapt it to researchers 'community.

Working conditions

Remarks **(max 500 words)**

Due to the COVID19 outbreak, *ad hoc* telework legislation has been created at national level. This means, public administrations must adapt their previous norms to the new guidelines and obligations laid down in it. USAL is currently in that process. The University intends to widen the scope of the current documents and the rules/procedures therein.

The information is provided in Spanish and English as a reference for research staff along with national legislation: Royal Decree-law 28/2020, 22 of September, on Remote Work.

Docentia software and Virtual Campus "*Studium*" have been improved. The new Virtual Campus "*Studium*" version allows to give classes by Zoom, record them and broadcast on YouTube.

Also, the criteria applied in the *Docentia* program have been updated, following the recommendations established in the institutional meta-evaluation self-reports and the external evaluation reports issued by ANECA and ACSUCyL (the regional and national authorities in this field).

Regarding the stabilization of interim personnel, USAL has published the call "Grants for the Requalification of Spanish University System 2021-2023" and will apply the Royal Decree-Law 14/2021, of July 6, 2021. The purpose of the resolution is to approve the 2021 call for applications for the awarding of grants, on a competitive basis, for stays for the training of young researchers, the promotion of the mobility of its teaching and research staff to maintain a high level of qualification of civil servant or contract university teaching staff, and the attraction of the international talent.

Most of the new postdoc researchers hired by the University of Salamanca in the last two years have a contract for the incorporation of researchers into the Spanish science and technology system. This type of contract allows the stabilization of these researchers through a simpler process.

In 2021, USAL has submitted 20 proposals requesting to the Spanish Ministry of Science call for the acquisition, installation and start-up of scientific-technical equipment necessary for the execution of quality research, the improvement of results and their scientific, economic and social impact, as well as for the proper operation of the existing research infrastructures.

Within the framework of public aid in 2021 for the execution of investments included in the Strategic Plans of Singular Scientific and Technical Infrastructures (ICTs) that have been declared of high priority by the Advisory Committee of Singular Infrastructures (CAIS), USAL has requested 3 grants that aim to facilitate the execution of the Strategic Plans of the ICTs included in the current National Map of ICTs. In all cases, these are investment lines associated with the construction, development, instrumentation, equipment and improvement of the Scientific-Technical capacities of the ICTs.

Training and development

Strengths and Weaknesses (max 500 words)

Strengths

Professional career and training: USAL has added to its wide regular training offer, a substantial list of courses with a strengthened focus on transversal competence. This initiative has been carried out in alignment with the Strategic Plan 2020-2023. Generally, departments, centres, research Institutes and units have been tracking this increase. However, the monitoring is not available in all cases.

In the framework of career development support from our institution, a pilot mentorship program has been drawn up and launched among R2 researchers. The concept of mentoring, steps to be followed to participate, structure of the program and planning etc., can be consulted in a brand-new website.

Senior researchers willing to become mentors can find an easy way to express their interest on the same website. Likewise, it is open to other potential mentors external to USAL.

As part of the strategy to solve the lack of career advice, a Manual for career options has been prepared including a variety of items that directly affect researchers at any stage of their career. The content ranges from options in the research career in/outside Academia, to transition to industry, going into soft skills and other gateways to different professional alternatives. It has been uploaded to the new Research portal to increase its visibility.

Supervision: Supervisor-supervisee (R1 who are not enrolled in a PhD programme and R2) relationship principles are being revised and will be reflected in a Supervision Agreement. A draft of this document has been generated and is currently upon revision by the AGI (Research management Agency in the Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer), the controller unit of the job contracts for researchers in collaboration with the General HR department at USAL., the University Ombudsman and the Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer would be at their disposal to mediate any conflict arisen between a supervisor and the supervised person. These possibilities have been included in the Welcome Manual.

Weaknesses

Professional career: Monitoring of the training offer has not been carried out in some departments, units, research institutes and USAL's funded research institutes. This makes tracking the needs of the research staff difficult to be evaluated when carrying out the future planning of courses.
The mentorship program for researchers is not yet fully established at USAL. The USAL mentor network suitable for R2 researchers, it is somewhat reduced, hence, measures to solve this situation will be studied. The programme was introduced only to the R2 researchers at the Institution, and therefore the reach of this initiative has been limited.
The mentorship program and the manual for careers options are unknown to a large number of researchers, according to the biennial survey about the HR strategy. For this reason, it has been decided to disseminate information on this issue through specific emails to potentially interested groups.

Supervision: Difficulties in the implementation of the Supervision Agreement for a wide range of job contracts types have arisen. Concepts to be included can sometimes be controversial, particularly when considering compliance of legislation.

Training and development

Remarks ^(max 500 words)

Active yearly monitoring of training offer, as well as the demand from the research community and attendants, will be advised to the departments, units, research institutes, and USAL's funded research institutes. Ideally, the training offer (along with the enrolment mechanisms) should be centralized through a unique portal.

The Transversal competences course in the Doctorate School has been implemented in the 2020-2021 academic term, with great demand and acceptance among all R1 students. This program has been established to continue in the following years.

The mentorship program, named MentoR2, has been introduced to mentees in an initial info session. Besides, a workshop about Entrepreneurship for Doctors was also lectured, with the aim of showing USAL R2 researchers the opportunities the entrepreneurship offers inside and outside the University. In this case, attendants could learn how to use the scientific method as a company-creator tool. USAL will evaluate the impact and acceptance of the program and, based on that, it will rearrange the strategy to best suit the needs of the researchers 'collective.

MentoR2 website: https://investigacion.usal.es/mentor2

Concerning the supervision agreement, a well-established criterion for the R2 and R1 (not enrolled in a PhD programme) is still lacking in the institution.

Have any of the priorities for the short and medium term changed? (max 500 words)

To achieve a greater impact and a real change in USAL's human resources policies, several issues related to OTM-R actions will be in the starting line for the next stage of the implementation. In any case, the priorities are reinforced by the lines of action related to human resources that are included in the current USAL Strategic Plan, which, in turn, reflects USAL's commitment to improve the system of selection, hiring and working conditions of researchers.

In addition, the priorities at the institutional level remains as initially established, confirming USAL's determination and consistency with the Action Plan.

Unfortunately, the pandemic situation has affected some of the activities aimed at the development of the Action Plan, which have been delayed, as the governance team and the services of the institution have had to cope with the new situation of teleworking, electronic records, online classes, online thesis defence presentations, etc.

Given the experience that the institution's staff has had with telework due to the pandemic, telework has become a reality and a priority that needs to be addressed through internal policy. The institution will work to promote training on telework strategies and provide institutional resources to optimize the performance of the research community and institutional staff in general in this current context.

Have any of the circumstances in which your organisation operates changed and as such have had an impact on your HR strategy? (max 500 words)

In the last stage of implementation of the current Action Plan, there have been several obstacles at the operational level, mainly due to the pandemic situation and all that it has implied. The University of Salamanca, like the rest of European universities, has directly suffered the impact of the pandemic and has been able, in a very short period of time, to generate solutions and response mechanisms. These have focused on maintaining quality standards in teaching, in the reactivation of daily activities such as research or knowledge transfer and, finally, in personnel management. Another of the elements that USAL has faced is the use of technology to innovate in teaching and to improve virtual laboratories and training in digital skills of its teaching and research staff.

As a result, the University's plans for implementation and awareness among the University community (with special emphasis on the research community) have been seriously affected. This point will be detailed in the section "Overview of the planned overall implementation process of the Action Plan".

In addition, as mentioned above, the Vice Rector for Research and Knowledge Transfer has changed, together with his advisors and support staff. Nevertheless, the outgoing Vice Rector has briefed the information regarding the Action Plan and the status of each of the actions in detail to the new Vice Rector. The new Vice Rector fully supports the HR Strategy process, but until he has assumed his tasks, decision making has been delayed, which has been detrimental to the development of the implementation according to the planned schedule.

Are any strategic decisions under way that may influence the Action Plan? (max 500 words)

Some of the actions formulated in the USAL's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan will foster the implementation of some of the HRS4R actions:

Under the last USAL Strategic Plan 2013-2018, and as part of the new one, 2020-2023, a priority that may influence the Action Plan is related to Knowledge, Transfer and Innovation generation. It was already taken into account when the Action Plan was scaffolded. It comprises 11 actions deriving from 2 Strategic Objectives, namely:

1. The stimulation of world-class scientific production in all knowledge fields.
2. To promote entrepreneurship, transfer and innovation.

Among the actions, it is worthy to emphasize two that are already being developed and will be extended in time, and that will have a direct impact on the Action Plan:

Firstly, to enhance and improve specialized units supporting R+D+i management: to this end, a specific part of USAL budget has been allotted to recruitment calls in order to increase the research management staff in different units (AGI, OTRI, OPI). As these selection processes depend on different variables (for example: number of applicants, holiday breaks, national/European legislation to be complied with, bureaucratic requirements/time zones when the candidate is a citizen from outside the EU, etc.), they can sometimes be quite time-consuming and hold up the action. In spite of this, the benefit of staff reinforcement overcomes these circumstances since the initial delay will be compensated by the greater work capacity of the unit after newcomers join.

Secondly, to incentivize research production: Promotion of young researchers and postdoc researchers following the OTM-R general procedures. This action pertaining to the new Strategic Plan 2020-2023 overlaps with actions "Set up a talent attraction programme" and "Enhancement of the OTM-R practices exchange", defined in the former Strategic Plan.

Moreover, in the new Strategic Plan, USAL has the compromise to facilitate participation in international public calls by supporting the formation of strategic consortia with other countries. In this line, the achievement of COFUND USAL4EXCELLENCE project has made the need to reinforce the actions of the Action Plan more necessary, especially in relation to OTM-R policy.

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3. Actions

Please consult the list of all actions you have submitted as part of your HR Strategy. Please add to the overview the current status of these actions as well as the status of the indicators. If any actions have been altered or omitted, please provide a commentary for each action. You can also select new objectives.

Note: Choose one or more of the principles from the GAP Analysis with their implementation ratings: New, In Progress, Completed, Extended

Proposed ACTIONS

Principles:

(2) 01. Research freedom	(3) 02. Ethical principles	(4) 03. Professional responsibility
(2) 04. Professional attitude	(3) 05. Contractual and legal obligations	(2) 06. Accountability
(4) 07. Good practice in research	(2) 08. Dissemination, exploitation of results	
(5) 09. Public engagement	(2) 10. Non discrimination	(3) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems
(4) 13. Recruitment (Code)	(4) 14. Selection (Code	(4) 15. Transparency (Code)
(5) 16. Judging merit (Code)	(4) 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code)	
(4) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)	(4) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)	
(4) 20. Seniority (Code)	(2) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code)	
(2) 22. Recognition of the profession	(2) 23. Research environment	(4) 24. Working conditions
(2) 25. Stability and permanence of employment	(4) 26. Funding and salaries	
(3) 27. Gender balance	(5) 28. Career development	(4) 29. Value of mobility
(4) 30. Access to career advice	(3) 31. Intellectual Property Rights	(3) 32. Co-authorship
(4) 33. Teaching	(3) 34. Complains/ appeals	(2) 35. Participation in decision-making bodies
(3) 36. Relation with supervisors	(2) 37. Supervision and managerial duties	
(3) 38. Continuing Professional Development		
(2) 39. Access to research training and continuous development	(3) 40. Supervision	

ACTION	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit(s)	Indicators/Target(s)
A1. KICK-OFF AND STRENGTH AWARENESS OF THE CHARTER & CODE CRITERIA.	All	Q3 2019	‣ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer	‣ WG HRS4R constituted. ‣ WG OTM-R constituted. ‣ Online material prepared. ‣ Report of the biennial HRS4R survey.

Current status	Remarks
Completed	The HRS4R website in USAL gathers the updates concerning the evolution of the HR policies in the institution: https://investigacion.usal.es/hrs4r
	The kick-off meeting had an attendance of 82 people, most of them (78) from the Teaching and Research Staff. 3 attendants belonged to the Administrative Units. It was also recorded and offered for later consultation at https://investigacion.usal.es/en/research-strategies#hrs4r:tmp_conv1seminar
	The Implementation Working Group (IWG) was appointed slightly after the HR Excellence Award was granted to USAL, taking as its base the previous existing HRS4R Working Group.
	The OTM-R Group was renewed for the implementation phase, as it was considered that the already involved personnel remained to be the most appropriate for the assigned tasks.
	The biennial survey was carried out between the end of June and mid-July with a remarkable high participation of more than 680 replies. The results were quite revealing for the future decision-making about the steps to be taken at USAL.

ACTION	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit(s)	Indicators/Target(s)
A2. UNIFY AND ORGANIZE WEB INFORMATION	09. Public engagement 29. Value of mobility 38. Continuing Professional Development	Q1, Q2 2020	▸ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer.	▸ Website updated. ▸ Special communication events performed. ▸ Increase in 50% the number of clicks in each web page.

Current status	Remarks
Completed	The Research Portal at USAL (https://investigacion.usal.es) has continuously being updated along the implementation process in order to include the new documents and sections that relate directly to the rest of the Actions of the HR Strategy for Researchers: ▸ Outreach (Scientific Culture and Innovation Unit): https://culturacientifica.usal.es/ ▸ IP-related information: https://investigacion.usal.es/en/intelectual-property ▸ Teleworking: https://investigacion.usal.es/es/info-teletrabajo ▸ Training: https://investigacion.usal.es/en/researchers-training Although this Action is marked as complete, it is acknowledged that this website must be in continuous renewal for being one of the main information sources for the research community. Along these years the Scientific Culture and Innovation Unit has been particularly active, even along the pandemic lockdown. Some of the most remarkable among the 59 activities performed only in 2021, have been the following: "*Women that change USAL*" (Exhibition at the International day of the Woman and girls in Science 2021); "*After the Pandemic: now what?*" (Talk in Scientific Spring 2021); "*Importance of the energy efficiency*" (Talk); "*Capsule of Climate Hope*" (Talk) The clicks of the website have been recorded along the last years: 2018-2019: 46324; 2019-2020: 46673; 2020-2021: 58242; A significant increase of 25% in the number of visits has been observed in the last year when most of the changes and contents were introduced, although the target figure of 50% has not been reached.

ACTION	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit(s)	Indicators/Target(s)
A3. USAL WELCOME MANUAL FOR RESEARCHERS AND TRAINING SESSION.	05. Contractual and legal obligations	Q3, Q4 2020	▸ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer	▸ Welcome manual published online. ▸ At least 100 attendees at the biannual training course for newcomers.
	07. Good practice in research			
	09. Public engagement	**Current status**	**Remarks**	
	24. Working conditions	Completed	A Welcome manual with the most important information for newcomers has been written, it will be progressively updated and improved. It is accessible on the HRS4R website https://investigacion.usal.es/en/research-strategies#hrs4r:resources.	
	27. Gender balance			
	28. Career development		Concerning the biannual training course for newcomers, this training activity has not been organized due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As an alternative approach, a "Welcome website" (https://investigacion.usal.es/es/welcome-researchers) was set up, containing also the welcome manual, but also videos informing the potential USAL newcomers about relevant issues for their integration to their new workspace. Additionally, researchers who will be recruited by USAL in the upcoming year will be invited to the Welcome Fair organized yearly at the beginning of the academic course.	
	29. Value of mobility			
	33. Teaching			
	34. Complaints/ appeals			
A4. WRITE USAL'S CODE OF GOOD PRACTICES IN RESEARCH	02. Ethical principles	Q1, Q2 2020	▸ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer.	▸ Manual published Online ▸ At least 50 attendees to workshops
	03. Professional responsibility			
	07. Good practice in research	**Current status**	**Remarks**	
	31. Intellectual Property Rights	In progress	The Manual of Good Practice in Research has been elaborated and it is published. Spanish version is complete and it is available at: https://investigacion.usal.es/sites/investigacion.usal.es/files/hrs4r/MBPI.pdf	
	32. Co-authorship		However, an English version is not ready yet, but in current stage of translation by the Language Central Service.	
	40. Supervision		Workshops are planned to be organised September 2021 onwards.	

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ACTION	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit(s)	Indicators/Target(s)
A5. BOOST THE ETHICS/BIOETHICS COMMITTEE RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES	02. Ethical principles 03. Professional responsibility	Q4 2019, Q1 2020	‣ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer	‣ Updated ethical/bioethical committee. ‣ Research ethics/bioethics rules. ‣ Manual updated published online in Spanish and English.

Current status	Remarks
In progress	Bioethical Committee is in the last stage of the process to changing its denomination. It has been already decided to be modified to "Ethics Committee for Research" (as translated from Spanish), which will encompass all study fields. Currently, the Ethics Committee for Research is in the process of reviewing its internal regulations. This process is bound to be completed by October 2021, and the resulting regulations will be made public right after, and sent for translation to the Language Central Service along with the Manual for project evaluation.

ACTION	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit(s)	Indicators/Target(s)
A6. IMPROVE GENERAL OTM-R PROCEDURES	12. Recruitment 13. Recruitment (Code) 14. Selection (Code) 15. Transparency (Code) 16. Judging merit (Code) 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code) 20. Seniority (Code)	Q3 2020- Q3 2022	‣ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer and ‣ Vice Rectorate of Teachers and Academic Organisation	‣ Portal accessible to 100% candidates ‣ 100% of the job offers published in English and Spanish. ‣ 100% of job offers published on EURAXESS platform. ‣ Mailing list created. ‣ OTM-R policy revised and published.

Current status	Remarks
In progress	The accessibility of the job portal is currently limited to candidates holding a valid Electronic Certificate. A working alternative has been proposed by the subcontracted software that provides this service. This alternative is currently in internal testing stage, and is expected to be implemented in October 2021. The translation of the most common call models, along with the application forms for Research hiring are being designed. Also, the job platform (again, dependent on an external software provider) is in translation. All researcher and technician job offers linked to European, International, and the USAL own programmes have been published in the institutional account of EURAXESS. The creation of mailing lists supposes a technical challenge concerning the implementation with the Job Portal. Ideas have been outlined by the appropriate technical staff. Prototypes of the implementation of these mailing lists are expected to be tested in the forthcoming year. The previous actions covering different revised areas of the OTM-R policy (improve the access to portal, offers published in European platforms), are the first steps towards a completion of the implementation of this policy that will culminate in the "OTM-R hiring manual". USAL continues in this line.

ACTION	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit(s)	Indicators/Target(s)
A7. IMPLEMENT AND TRAIN ON OTM-R PROCEDURES	12. Recruitment	Q1 2022	▸ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer and ▸ Vice Rectorate of Teachers and Academic Organisation.	▸ Selection and Recruiting OTM-R guide published. ▸ Publish evaluation scales for the recruitment of researchers considering the chronological variation of cv. ▸ At least 20 attendees at training courses on OTM-R for administrative staff available. ▸ At least 65 attendees at training courses on OTM-R for researchers involved in recruiting processes available. ▸ Basic information on OTM-R included in welcome manual.
	13. Recruitment (Code)			
	14. Selection (Code)			
	15. Transparency (Code)			
	16. Judging merit (Code)			
	17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code)			
	18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)			
	19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)	**Current status**	**Remarks**	
	20. Seniority (Code)	In progress	Given that this action is programmed for Q1 2022, this action still remains in a very early stage. Still, there are initial drafts of the training contents that will be provided to the administrative staff and researchers involved in recruiting processes, including the "OTM-R hiring manual".	
A8. PILOT THE USAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM	28. Career development	Q1 2020	▸ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer and ▸ Vice Rectorate of Graduate Studies.	▸ Pilot mentorship program set up. ▸ At least 20 attendees at training courses to improve the mentorship abilities and mentors available.
	30. Access to career advice			
		Current status	**Remarks**	
		In progress	A new mentorship programme has been set up for the course 2021 (https://investigacion.usal.es/mentor2). With a demand from the R2 researchers slightly below the expected, the programme is currently under way. It will be decided whether to continue it or offer it along the mentorship programme that is currently established for R1 researchers. Training courses to improve mentorship abilities were lectured; the 20 attendees course was not reached, as the demand was lower.	

ACTION	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit(s)	Indicators/Target(s)
A9. OFFER SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT	09. Public engagement 28. Career development 30. Access to career advice	Q1 2021	▸ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer and ▸ Vice Rectorate of Graduate Studies.	▸ Map research career options published on line. ▸ At least 80 attendees at workshops and courses organized for professional career development.

Current status	Remarks
Completed	The professional research career guide is published as an Annex of the Manual for Professional Research Options published in https://investigacion.usal.es/en/research-strategies#hrs4r:resources Courses covering professional career development, more specifically, Workshops about Social and Cultural Entrepreneurship for PhD students, are periodically lectured by the Professional Integration, Internships, Employment and Entrepreneurship Service (SIPPE) with an attendance that exceeds the indicator figure.

ACTION	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit(s)	Indicators/Target(s)
A10. COLLECT INFORMATION CONCERNING TELEWORKING	24. Working conditions	Q3 2020	▸ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer and ▸ Vice Rectorate of Teachers and Academic Organisation.	▸ Teleworking information published online.

Current status	Remarks
Completed	Accessible information in both English and Spanish languages, regarding teleworking was included on the website: https://investigacion.usal.es/en/info-teletrabajo In order to meet the national legislation in force, an internal norm is intended to be established. It is pending to be discussed by the USAL Governing body.

ACTION	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit(s)	Indicators/Target(s)
A11. IMPROVE SALARIES IN SOME SPECIAL CASES	26. Funding and salaries	Q3 2019	‣ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer.	‣ Improved salaries for R1 and R2 researchers.
		Current status	**Remarks**	
		Completed	In 2019 the retributions of *Juan de la Cierva Formación* were equated with other competitive regional government post-docs contracts. The increase of the salaries of R1 researchers was done in agreement of the "*Estatuto del Personal Investigador en Formación*"	
A12. IMPROVE ASSESSMENT FOR RESEARCHERS	11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems 16. Judging merit (Code) 26. Funding and salaries 33. Teaching	Q3, Q4 2021	‣ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer and ‣ Vice Rectorate of Teaching and Quality Assessment.	‣ Guideline and template for the research evaluation of R2 researchers published. ‣ Updated evaluation criteria of the *Docentia* software. ‣ Published the updated access criteria for the non-functionary teaching staff.
		Current status	**Remarks**	
		In progress	Drafts of the template and guidelines have been proposed, and are being studied by the Implementation Working Group at the time of the Internal Evaluation. Following steps will include a review by the Human Resources unit and the Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer. As every year, *Docentia* software criteria was updated considering the Researchers' observations reflected in the GAP analysis. https://calidad.usal.es/2020/10/19/programa-docentia-usal-convocatoria-2020-2021/ Access criteria for the non-functionary teaching staff is published. - Assistant Professor: https://www.usal.es/files/criterios_aplica_baremo_plazaspad.pdf - Lecturer: https://www.usal.es/files/criterios_aplica_baremo_plazasaso.pdf	

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ACTION	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit(s)	Indicators/Target(s)
A13. IMPROVE THE TRAINING OFFER FOR R1 AND R2	02. Ethical principles	Q1, Q2 2020	▸ Vice Rectorate of Teaching and Quality Evaluation	▸ Updated training offer for R1 and R2 researchers available. ▸ Increase in at least 50% the number of attendees to each training course for R1 and R2.
	03. Professional responsibility			
	05. Contractual and legal obligations			
	07. Good practice in research	**Current status**	**Remarks**	
	08. Dissemination, exploitation of results	Completed	Training offer has been updated for the courses 2019/2020 and 2020/2021: The Continuous Training Programme for the Teaching and Research Staff updates on a year's basis using as a guideline the results of the satisfaction surveys done at the end of each course. Additionally, new courses have been proposed in the context of TCUE (USAL Transfer Knowledge University-Business Project). It must be highlighted the brand-new programme created by the Doctorate School targeted at transversal competences (https://doctorado.usal.es/es/formacion-transversal) training of R1 researchers.	
	31. Intellectual Property Rights			
	38. Continuing Professional Development			
	39. Access to research training and continuous development		Regarding to the completion of the indicators, it was detected that monitoring of course attendance is lacking in some Institutes, Units, Departments and Centres, Measures to unify these indicators are being studied. However, in general, an increase in the training offer has been observed in the last years, along with some particular increases of vacancies in some of the courses. This has revealed a new weakness that will be tackled in the Reviewed Action Plan.	

ACTION	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit(s)	Indicators/Target(s)
A14. IMPROVE SOME ISSUES CONCERNING THE SUPERVISION OF R1 AND R2 RESEARCHERS FUNDED BY RESEARCH PROJECT	36. Relation with supervisors	Q32019, Q4 2020	▸ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer and ▸ Vice Rectorate of Teaching and Quality Evaluation.	▸ 100% R1 researchers with project contract have annual reports. ▸ 100% R2 researchers with project contracts have signed supervision agreement.
		Current status	**Remarks**	
		In progress	R1 researchers who are enrolled in any PhD programme have annual reports according to the Doctorate Schools Rules. On the other hand, the existence of R1 researchers with contracts longer than a year and not enrolled in a PhD programme is extremely rare, and no such cases have been identified in the recent two years. Regardless of this fact, for R1 researchers hired within research projects, a clause in this respect will be included in a Supervision Agreement (Action 14). A supervision agreement draft for R2 researchers has been developed, and is currently under evaluation by the services in charge of personnel hiring.	
A15. REVISE THE GENDER PLAN	All	Q3, Q4 2021	▸ Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer and ▸ Vice Rectorate of Teaching and Quality Evaluation.	▸ Working group on Gender appointed. ▸ USAL Gender Equality Plan updated (under considerations of the gender working group)
		Current status	**Remarks**	
		In progress	The Working Group on Gender is the Commission of Equality from the Gender Equality Unit: https://igualdad.usal.es/comision-de-igualdad/ All issues concerning gender balance are being reviewed by an appointed Negotiation Committee (working group), where different communities regarding the University are represented. This action is not only being carried out due to the HRS4R, but it is also contemplated in the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. The Gender Plan will be updated by the end of 2021, fulfilling the deadline for the indicator.	

Note: Add as many actions are needed.

The extended version of the reviewed HR Strategy for your organisation for the next 3 years, including the OTM-R policy must be published on your organisation's website. Please provide the link to the dedicated webpage(s) on your organisation's web site *:

URL: https://investigacion.usal.es/hrs4r

If your organisation has already filled in the OTM-R checklist in the Initial Phase, please also indicate how your organisation is working towards / has developed an Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Policy. Although there may be some overlap with a range of actions listed above in the Action Plan (as emerged from the Gap Analysis), please provide a short commentary demonstrating the progress of the implementation versus the initial phase.

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles

The Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer is taking action to implement the OTM-R policy. The commitment of USAL with these principles is reflected in the most recent Strategic Plan 2020-2023.

For the next HRS4R implementation stage, USAL will work in the elaboration of a policy for OTM-R (OPEN, TRANSPARENT and MERIT-based Recruitment of Researchers Policy under the European Research Area). The main aim of this policy will be to state the human resources policy aligned with the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, providing more clear and transparent information on the whole selection process, and within the framework of the current Spanish and Regional employment legislation and the current Collective agreement of the teaching and research staff of the Regional public universities.

This policy will be involved in the following stages:

1. Recruitment procedures
2. Selection and evaluation process
3. Appointment and Welcome

The actions envisaged in the Action Plan which are aligned with the OTM-R principles are:
A6. Improve general OTM-R procedures and A7. Implement and train on OTM-R procedures

The OTM-R implementation working group will review and define the processes for selecting and recruiting researchers, for the progressive adaptation to the OTM-R system. It will comprise the following actions:

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles

1. Recruitment procedures

Improve the advertising of the calls for personnel recruitment:

All calls for applications to permanent and temporary research positions are publically announced at USAL website (https://sede.usal.es/web/guest/tablon). Work will be also under way on improving the English version of this website.

Additionally, USAL has increased its percentage of publication of vacancies for R1 and R2 in EURAXESS in order to widen dissemination of job offers. This has entitled a significant improvement compared to previous practices in which, just positions linked to European Projects were advertised. A particular effort will be made in the coming months to advertise most of the USAL job positions in EURAXESS and in other International Job Portals.

In the previous version of the Action Plan was envisaged taking an action related to create mailing lists for advertising USAL job offers but after a deep analysis of the requirements and adjustments needed to implement it, it has not been possible to kick off the procedures until the rest of the digital structure was renewed. Nevertheless, brainstorming sessions and draft plans have taken place and this issue will be an immediate task to perform soon.

The calls for applications must specify the characteristics and requirements that candidates must meet and the stages and procedures in the recruitment process:

‣ Conditions of the call; including information about: requirements, how to apply, deadline, selection procedure, selection committee, working conditions
‣ Posts offered
‣ Calendar

Calls are currently published in Spanish only. USAL is working on translating the most common call templates so that future job offers are more accessible for external candidates. However, the full translation of job tasks and requirements will be up to the Professor or Researcher that opens each job position.

The OTM-R policy should promote the insertion of disadvantaged groups in situations of equality at USAL.

Improve access to candidates:

An 'e-recruitment' tool has been developed to facilitate the application process and keep the administrative burden for the candidate and the University to a minimum. This tool will be implemented progressively to all research staff calls. This system will include the translation of the portal to English language, and the possibility of registering applications without a Spanish Digital Certificate. Up to now, this was not possible at all. It must be taken into account that, the platform is externalized and the platform functioning over and hence, although USAL has requested the pertinent upgrades in the software, the progress of the Action implementation depends on the providers´ pace.

As it concerns the document and application registration, USAL is preparing alternative method, the *Registro Único de Solicitantes-RUS*, (Single Registry for Applicants) which does not require a Spanish Digital Certificate. Additionally, this alternative method will be accompanied by a publicly available short user guide for foreign applicants. Right now, it is on a testing stage, and it is expected to be ready by October 2021.

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles

2. Selection and evaluation:

The new OTM-R policy will regulate the composition of the selection/recruitment committees and must always guarantee the necessary scientific and teaching ability of the components. The composition should follow the principles of impartiality and professionalism of its members, and must seek a balanced composition between women and men, unless it is not possible for duly motivated and substantiated reasons.

Some measures related to this matter, have already been taken. The first one is in relation to the selection committees, in which establishing a minimum of three members instead of solely the Principal Investigator (PI) is compulsory in order to establish a more transparent selection process as part of the OTM-R system. In this way, bias in judgement of the candidate´s capacities is considerably reduced and a fairer selection is accomplished. Besides the PI, the members are recruited from different USAL Services in connection with the vacancy, e.g., Vice Rectorates, Administration and Services Staff of the area of Knowledge, Commission of Research members, etc.

Candidates will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- **Academic profile.**
- **Other merits:** including research, previous professional experience, experiences of mobility in the private sector, periods of inactivity and other objective criteria that assess other capacities.

Results of each stage in the recruitment process are published on USAL website, together with any relevant information for candidates.

If the selection/recruitment committee decides so, the process can be concluded with the position going unfilled.

It will be obligatory to publish how each criterion will be assessed and its maximum score and define a blended system including not only quantitative methods, but also qualitative criteria to consider the interviews.

In the context of A7 of the Action Plan: Implement and train on OTM-R procedures, USAL staff will be trained on how to carry out the OTM-R process. Given that this action is programmed for Q1 2022, this action still remains at an early stage.

Specific training will be provided to the administrative staff and researchers involved in recruiting processes, including the production of a OTM-R hiring manual according to the Action. This training will cover call publicity inside and outside the institution, documentation management, open and transparent candidature evaluation, applicant feedback, and allegation management.

3. Appointment and Welcome

USAL strongly believes that the best research results come from offering the best working conditions. As such, USAL is committed to offer the staff members the best facilities to run their research, and the best environment and support for their activities. Administrative and financial support will be offered to the fellow and hosting research group to guarantee that all the paperwork is properly done and the fellow can run smoothly their new life in the USAL. Several USAL administrative units will work together to take care of the fellow in terms of contract signing, VISA issues, research funds management for their project, trips and accommodation arrangements, etc.

Ideally, the extended version of the reviewed OTM-R policy and actions should be published on your organisation's website.
Please provide the web link to the OTM-R dedicated webpage(s) if it is different than the one where the reviewed HR Strategy is located.

URL: *https://investigacion.usal.es/hrs4r*

4. Implementation

General overview of the expected overall implementation process of the Action Plan: (max. 1000 words)

General overview of the expected overall implementation process of the Action Plan: (max. 1000 words)

As mentioned above, the COVID19 pandemic seriously hampered the HRS4R implementation schedule. The coronavirus outbreak and the subsequent shutdown made communication and coordination between the different Heads of Service, Vice Rectorates and Units extremely difficult, especially because not only HRS4R-related issues were affected, but also the functioning of the University as a whole. In this scenario, priorities had to be established to guarantee the university's teaching and research activities, temporarily leaving aside other institutional matters. The university authorities devoted most of their time to reorienting and resolving the situation.

The uninterrupted research support services were also of great importance, and the Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer put a lot of effort into their continuity. In addition, some of these services became part of a network in charge of coronavirus diagnosis operating at national level, which required prior cooperation agreements with the national authorities. At the same time, the procedures for negotiating these cooperation agreements and the protocols to be applied led to delays in other matters.

Although there were repercussions on the Action Plan, it has been possible to accelerate the activities, which has allowed the timely completion of some of them and the progress of others. When the health situation improved, the institution found itself in a favourable situation to restart gradually but continuously each of the actions. During this first half of 2021, the Action Plan has regained momentum.

Some of the main actions are described below:

A1. LAUNCHING AND STRENGTHENING AWARENESS OF THE CHARTER AND CODE CRITERIA

After the involvement of researchers of different profiles and other colleagues dedicated to management tasks, to join the working groups in the early stages of the implementation process, the dissemination of the C&C criteria was launched. It began with a kick-off meeting open to the Teaching and Research Staff and to the Service Administration Staff of the different units and services. It was disseminated to provide them with information and to pave the way for future collaboration when contributions and/or actions of different types were required.

With the help of the researchers in the working groups, the Vice Rector's Office staff was able to learn more about their concerns and gather their ideas for the implementation of the Action Plan. They were also involved in the dissemination of the Action Plan. A clear example of this is the video they starred in explaining the award and its advantages. This video is part of the online material foreseen in the Action Plan together with other dissemination elements such as roll-ups, Social Networks, USAL's Internal Newsletter, etc.

A2. UNIFY AND ORGANIZE THE INFORMATION ON THE WEBSITE

The USAL researcher portal (investigacion.usal.es) has undergone several improvements. Some of them are:

‣ Improved classification and access to research calls.
‣ Access to documents such as the Welcome Manual, the Manual of Good Practices in Research, the Guide for the Development of the Professional Career, information on Intellectual Property, Teleworking options and resources, and the centralized access page to training.
‣ Access to the Scientific Culture and Innovation Unit portal, where all related activities are collected.
‣ The Scientific Production portal, which includes the achievements and participation in projects of the Research Staff.

This will continue to be updated in the coming years, since the biennial survey showed that this improvement in the information on the web page is considered very useful by the Research Community.

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General overview of the expected overall implementation process of the Action Plan: (max. 1000 words)

A3. WELCOME MANUAL FOR RESEARCHERS AND TRAINING SESSION

A Welcome Manual for Researchers has been published and can be accessed on the HRS4R website. This manual includes basic information about USAL services, the procedures to be completed before joining the institution and general information on how to integrate into the city.

At the beginning of each academic year, the University Orientation Office (SPIO) organizes a Welcome Fair for newcomers. For the next academic year, the Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer will set up stands in this Fair. In addition, it is planned to organize 2 info days per academic year aimed at researchers on topics raised in the Action Plan such as IPR policies, dissemination of scientific results, etc. Finally, the creation of a welcoming committee to deal with these issues will be considered.

A9. PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT and A13. IMPROVE R1 AND R2 TRAINING OFFERINGS

The strengthening of the professional career is one of the main points to be improved. A percentage of students and researchers linked to the university demand information on the different career development paths. As a respond to that, the number of workshops has recently increased. The aim is to provide a set of tools to enable them to deploy the knowledge they have acquired and at the same time develop other transversal competencies useful for the professional world. In this way, the University strives to retain and attract talent. The information on alternatives has been expanded and materialized in the document "Career options for R1 and R2 researchers". Likewise, and in line with what was planned for A13, the offer of workshops for R1 and R2 has been expanded. The objective is that the capabilities of R1 researchers are progressively cultivated and that, when they become R2, their potential grows.

A10. COLLECT INFORMATION REGARDING TELEWORK

A statement regarding teleworking options has been published, both in Spanish and English, on the HRS4R web page accessible to all researchers. Its content will be refined in the future to be more specific, clearer and to comply and be aligned with the new Spanish legislation in this regard. Virtual teaching can be requested through a specific form available on the new HRS4R website.

A11. IMPROVING SALARIES IN SOME SPECIAL CASES

This action is fully implemented and in place since 2019, effectively bridging the differences between researchers with the same category but contracted by different programs.

A15. REVISION OF THE GENDER PLAN

All gender balance issues are being reviewed by a designated Negotiating Committee in which different groups of the University are represented.

Make sure you also cover all the aspects highlighted in the checklist, which you will need to describe in detail:

How have you prepared for the internal review? *

As proposed in the Action Plan, a working group for the implementation of the HR Strategy for Researchers was created just after the USAL received the award. As the relation of some of the researchers with the institution evolved, some have left the group, while others have joined. This group is composed by 2 researchers from each career stage (R1-R4) and from all five Areas of Knowledge.

The duties of these researchers were the following:

▸ General assessment of the Implementation Process.
▸ Reviewing the proposals to the Actions.
▸ Serving as a communication channel with the implicated units, Vice Rectorates, and the research community.
▸ Providing assistance in the diffusion of the HRS4R initiatives in the USAL policies.

In addition to the Teaching and Research Staff, three Technicians in project management of the International Project Office were part of this Implementation Group, whose duties are:

▸ Coordination and scheduling the execution of each of the Action
▸ Gathering the feedback from the researchers of the Implementation Group
▸ General management of the HRS4R in EURAXESS
▸ Communication with the consulting subcontract
▸ Compilation of the documentation generated during the implementation of each of the actions.

A specialized group was appointed at the initial stage to handle the particular OTM-R aspects of the HRS4R. It was renewed for the Implementation phase, with no changes. At present, it is composed of:

▸ Three Technicians in project management of the International Project Office. Females.
▸ One Technician from the Office for Research Results Transfer Office. Female.
▸ One Technician from the Research Management Office. Female.
▸ Two Professors (R4). Males, from different Areas of Knowledge.

Both, technicians and professors were selected from the University staff who are more active involved in Recruitment processes, being their duties the following:

▸ Detecting the critical areas of improvement in the selection processes.
▸ Gathering information about the technical constraints coming from the institutional resources that suppose a burden to carry out the Actions and proposing and evaluate viable solutions.
▸ Designing guidelines and protocols for call elaborations and publication, candidate evaluation, and
▸ Search for more agile and effective mechanism to strengthen selection processes at USAL.

To guide USAL in this process, a consulting firm specialized in the HR Excellence Award implementation has been contracted. It assists the promoter team with meetings programmed on a monthly basis, where initially established indicators are checked and confirmed. Besides, they solve inquiries and prompt suggestions to make the process more dynamic and ultimately, improve the outcome of the actions. They have also participated in the Kick-off meeting.

How have you involved the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process? *

There has been a great effort to involve the research community in the HR implementation process through continuous communication activities, internal interviews, and satisfaction surveys suggestions box to try to address the researchers´ needs reflected in the GAP analysis.

The HRS4R Implementation Group is primarily formed by researchers of all career stage levels and Areas of Knowledge. One of their primary roles along the implementation phase has been to serve as a communication channel between the research community as a whole and the agents appointed for the coordination the Action Plan implementation, including the Vice Rectorate of Research and Transference. This has led to a better and more objective understanding of the professional situation, concerns and aspirations, as well as a fairly effective feedback from the USAL research staff, which has contributed to an implementation phase that puts its researchers in the spotlight.

Another way that the research community and stakeholders have been involved is through the HRS4R awareness and communication strategy. This started with the kick-off meeting, with a high attendance, most of them belonging to the Teaching and Research staff.

The participation of many of these researchers in the kick-off meeting, and the new knowledge about the HRS4R in USAL as a result of new communication networks with the Working Group, has allowed the implementation process to account for a larger stakeholders target.

Further initiatives of the awareness and communication strategy was the informative institutional video shot about the HRS4R and the HR Excellence in Research award, which was screened in TVs around the faculty halls and Research Centres and Institutes. In this video, some researchers belonging to the HRS4R Implementation group took part, spreading the word about the meaning of such a distinction for the institution during the footage.

One of the most important initiatives to involve the research community is the biennial survey, launched at the end of June 2021. This survey allowed to know the awareness about the HRS4R implementation, and how the researchers evaluate the implemented changes in the HR policies.

Additionally, researchers who have taken part in new activities related to the HRS4R have been individually informed about this. Among these, the mentorship pilot programme for R2 researchers "MentoR2", and the new courses for professional career development can be highlighted.

The preparation of the materials developed for the HRS4R implementation stage, have been carried out in close collaboration with USAL community and then sent to the USAL Research Council for their review, comment and the subsequent approval.

However, it must be noted that the involvement of researchers and stakeholders has been severely impaired by the negative impact that the Covid-19 outbreak has supposed to the implantation of the Action Plan. As a consequence, communication strategies and effective start of the aforementioned activities linked with the new HR policies started several months after they were initially planned, thus provoking an overall limited reach of the awareness of the HRS4R at USAL.

Do you have an implementation committee and/or steering group regularly overseeing progress? *

At the highest hierarchical level, the Vice Rector's Office for Research and Knowledge Transfer is the entity in charge of transversal coordination for the smooth development and integration of the new Human Resources policies in the institution's regulations and procedures. It is in permanent communication, on the one hand with the Implementation Group, and on the other, with the other Vice Rectors' Offices, Heads of Unit or Services to manage decision-making on any possible situation in which the implementation of new policies or procedures may cause clashes in the general workflow of the institution.

The current Vice Rector for Research and Knowledge Transfer is coordinating the different bodies that must review the material and suggest modifications when they consider it is necessary. Regarding the ethical and professional aspects of research, the Research Council has played an important role in reviewing the documentation and as an advisory body supervising on a monthly basis all aspects that directly affect research activity and conditions of the researchers.

In this sense, the Research Council, through its monthly meetings, oversees all aspects directly affecting research and researchers. At these meetings, one item on the agenda is always aspects related to the implementation of the HR Strategy for Researchers Action Plan.

The Vice Rector's Office also requests the appropriate revision of the action materials, reviewing the suggestions, when they are made, to the affected bodies and units. For example, to ensure compliance with legislation and in the search for correct and fair binding documents, the Vice Rector's Office for Research and Knowledge Transfer relies on the Legal Office when drafting new documents or modifying existing ones that are required for certain actions.

The Implementation Group is in charge of the day-to-day activities, as well as the follow-up of the different actions. The group is in constant communication and is responsible for putting in contact the different offices and bodies that are participating in the implementation of materials and procedures. It has also overseen sending out the mid-term survey and analysing the results. These results will be the starting point from now on.

In addition, the consultant specialized in the implementation of the HR Excellence Award that has been hired assists the Implementation Group throughout the scheduled monthly meetings, resolving doubts and providing suggestions to improve the results of the actions, based on their experience with other public entities that have undergone the same process.

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Is there any alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? For example, is the HRS4R recognized in the organisation's research strategy, overarching HR policy

Some of the actions defined in the Action Plan for the HRS4R are already included in the current 2020-2023 USAL Strategic Plan. The HRS4R is fully aligned with the strategy of the University, which establishes the need to build a team of people aligned with the organisational model, based on OTM-R policies, which implies promoting and reactivating the development of people and talent as well as facilitating an efficient organisational model.

In the current (2020-2023) Strategic Plan, HRS4R is contemplated as one of the critical points around which the HR policy will revolve. More specifically, it is included in the lines:

1. Attraction and retention of research talent: The USAL Strategic Plan is aligned with HRS4R because is focused on the improvement of the selection and recruitment processes of research and teaching staff, the increase of the number of permanent positions and promoting the recruitment of young researchers and postdoctoral researchers following the general procedures of the "OTM-R Open Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment" of the "HRA - Human Resources Award".

2. Improving the research structure: The USAL Strategic Plan establishes as a priority the training and promotion of researchers, the effective and efficient management of its resources, innovation for sustainable development and collaboration with other agents' social organisations that join the University with the aim of improving the quality of life of society.

The USAL Strategy Plan also covers several measures such as: promotion of institutional programs for the incorporation of technical support staff, strengthening of the research activity; improvement of the research productivity evaluation system, promotion of the transfer and valorisation of research results and improved visibility of research activity through scientific outreach, as well as the promotion of "Open Access" and "Open Science" codes. These measures come from an extensive process of consultation maintained with the USAL teaching, research community, as well as with managerial and administrative services of the USAL.

The implementation working group will also be responsible for verifying that USAL's policies are consistent with the HRS4R and its Action Plans.

How has your organisation ensured that the proposed actions would be also implemented? *

The HRS4R leader, embodied by the Vice Rector for Research and Transference, has alerted the Steering Committee of any deviations from the timeline.

The Vice Rectorate has supported the necessary resources to proceed with the implementation of the actions and the concurrent tracking of the HRS4R's Action Plan, hiring two technicians. These people have worked full time ensuring that the envisaged actions were implemented. Also, it has appointed two dedicated groups to guide these actions for the sake of accounting for the research community demands in terms of HR policies.

The Implementation Working Group has carried out an internal assessment of the compliance with the HRS4R Strategy Action Plan and OTM-R. This group has reported to the Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer on the potential deviations from the schedule defined for each period. The degree of compliance with the actions implemented has been assessed by analysing and monitoring the results of the annual survey. Some contingency measures were adopted to try to solve the problems and to accelerate some actions.

Additionally, a quality control has been prior to the internal review with the assistance of an expert in HRS4R issues. His efforts were of great help in reaching the proper implementation of the actions.

Finally, the Rectorate is also aware of the need for support that can be provided by its Units and, therefore, these are usually willing to collaborate. All departments and support services including: social security services, legal office, recruitment office, university guidance office, Scientific Culture and Innovation Unit, *«Studii Salmantini»* Doctorate school and some others, have been involved in the implementation. Their main role has been providing information and assistance in their area of expertise within the institution.

Communication and interaction among the main actors have been paramount to put actions in motion and achieve the goals. Without this point, it would have not been feasible.

How are you monitoring progress (timeline)? *

The monitoring of the implementation is being carried out by the Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer with the help of a consulting firm, with which, the follow-up has been intensified in the past months, with monthly meetings. During these control sessions, indicators have been checked, their status controlled (percentage of progress), and confirmed.

The Implementation working group has hold bi-monthly meetings with the Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer to review the development of the implementation of the actions in progress.

Whenever it was necessary, adjustments in the actions have been proposed and their feasibility assessed. Once this established, the approach to fulfil the actions has been set and/or modified so as to obtain the maximum performance and diminish the setbacks. The specialist consulting firm contracted, has advised in matters concerning potentially essential documents to be collected: what sort of data would be needed as a justification of the actions carried out or legislation to be searched that would underpin the actions. Comments on primary points concerning certain transversal actions that might affect all GAP principles have been delivered.

The Implementation Working Group has also monitored advancements of the actions. It has been a key element due to its great knowledge of the institution, since several of their members have an extensive research background and some other members have many years of experience in management units. Its input (guidelines and indications) about USAL and its past and prevailing mechanisms have been very valuable, allowing more effective synergies among units thanks to very simple but saving-time practices such as contacting the most appropriate person/unit in order to collect the desired data bypassing unnecessary steps.

How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment? *

USAL intends to continue with the same strategy: regular meetings with both Working groups but with a deeper involvement of their members and the USAL community.

At this point, the HR Strategy is embedded in the institution and so, most of Services, Units and Vice Rectorates will keep on and increase their participating in the HR implementation. Their feedback will serve as a thermometer of the advancements accomplished. Surveys and polls launched by them as well as by the promoter team of the implementation of HR Strategy (Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer), will be one of the main instruments to monitor indicators, since they are an easy and fast method to obtain feedback.

From the depth analysis of the weaknesses and shortcomings noted in internal survey about the implementation phase of the HR strategy, it has been concluded that there have been many actions carried out within the framework of the strategy but they have not had enough visibility in the USAL community, therefore additional efforts will be needed to ensure wider dissemination of the Strategy, with particular emphasis on the communication of the main project progress or outcomes.

The progress will be measured through different indicators such us:
‣ Number of HR Strategy web page visits.
‣ Number of HR Strategy dissemination activities organized.
‣ Number of attendees to the HR Strategy dissemination activities.
‣ Number of the training courses organized.
‣ Number of the attendees to the training courses.
‣ Number of attendees to the Welcome sessions.
‣ Number of suggestions or queries sent to the suggestions mailbox.
‣ Number of suggestions or modifications proposed to the materials developed. The materials developed will be sent to the USAL Research Council for their review, comment and the subsequent approval.
‣ Number of vacancies offered in international portals.
‣ Number of responses to the annual satisfaction surveys. The responses will be taken into account to improve the implementation of the following strategy stages.

How do you expect to prepare for the external review? *

The USAL external review outcomes will be shown through a renewed and appropriate Action Plan, but also to a complete report that will include evidences of the actions carried out and how the OTM-R Policy has been implemented.

USAL will then continue implementing the actions according to the renewed Action Plan. This will encompass completion of the actions in progress and implementation of corrective measures. Implementation of new actions will also be observed.

Following the strategy HRS4R, we hope to consolidate a quality improvement that will be evidenced by specific indicators for each action. Progress will be monitored through the design of a "monitoring plan". The objective of the monitoring plan is primarily the regular review of the proposed actions. Therefore, it will contain a schedule of meetings of the Implementation Working Group and the Vice Rectorate of Research and Knowledge Transfer and Teachers and Academic Organisation. This group will carry out ordinary meetings once every two months, and extraordinary meetings at the request of a member.

The Steering Committee will meet once every four months to oversee the work of the Monitoring Group and to propose new actions, as appropriate. At the same time, the monitoring plan, will also include all the foreseen activities, focused on the participation of the research community during this implementation period. The results to carry out the follow-up, will be based on the information gathered in a progress report. In these reports, those responsible for each action, will elaborate a progress report, propose indicators, note any relevant data, etc. All the advances, the novelties and the news, in relation to this topic, will be published in the HR Excellence web page and diffused through internal and external communication channels, in order to give sufficient and necessary visibility to the application of the strategy HRS4R in USAL.

On the other hand, USAL will prepare its own OTM-R document. The document will describe in detail, the way in which the institution works, in terms of openness and transparency in recruitment processes.

It is worth noting that the role of the Steering Committee is to align the organisational policies with the HRS4R, ensuring that changes translate into organisation-wide standard procedures. Getting traction from transversal departments, particularly those involved in research, human resources and quality is essential to ensure that actions are implemented in an organisation with the dimension, heterogeneity and complexity. This is ensured by the alignment of the USAL Strategic Plan (2020-2023) with the European Charter for Researchers as for the respect for the principles of transparency, quality, integrity, equal opportunities, excellence and social responsibility of the institutional practices. The final aim is to implement the HRS4R itself as a continuous process that identifies aspects where improvement is needed, designs solutions and implements those solutions into the organisation.

The next years will be critical to consolidate and embed the HRS4R into the USAL, in preparation for the external review.

Additional remarks/comments about the proposed implementation process