

The University of Limerick's HR Strategy for Researchers

Why the University of Limerick has undertaken the HR Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)?

- The HR Strategy for Researchers will make the University of Limerick more attractive to researchers looking for a new employer or for a host for their research project. This will help to attract the best researchers from around the globe.
- The logo "HR Excellence in Research" will identify the University of Limerick as a provider and supporter of a stimulating and favourable working environment.
- The HR Strategy for Researchers will support the University of Limerick in the implementation of the Charter & Code in its policies and practices.

HR Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) - The University of Limerick Approach:

Following a successful expression of interest, the University of Limerick was accepted to be part of the third cohort of the EU HR Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) Group.

The forty principles outlined in the Charter & Code were reviewed the Human Resources and Research Office with a view to identifying the legislation, policies, and procedures currently in place. This step also involved identification of any clear gaps between the Charter & Code and existing practices and rules within the University of Limerick. A Euraxess Steering Committee was established consisting of the following representatives:

- VP Research
- Dean of Science & Engineering
- Dean of Education & Health Sciences
- Dean of Kemmy Business School
- Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
- Director of Research Support Services
- Human Resources Director
- Director of a Research Institute - Materials & Surfaces Science Institute
- Head of Department - Life Sciences
- Two Research Staff Representatives
- Human Resources Officer for Research

The first Steering Committee meeting was held in early 2012. At this meeting the working group was defined. The Working Group was established, based on recommendations from the Steering Committee. The Working Group consisted of the following representatives:

- Director of Research Support Services - Dr. Puneet Saidha
- Assistant Dean of Research, Faculty of Business – Dr. Helena Lenihan
- Assistant Dean of Research, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science – Dr. Helen Kelly Holmes
- Professor at the Graduate Entry Medical School, Faculty of Education and Health Science – Prof. Anne MacFarlane
- Lecturer, Faculty of Science and Engineering – Dr. Jakki Cooney
- Postdoctoral Researcher, Faculty of Science and Engineering – Dr. Tom Arbuckle
- Human Resources Officer for Research – Alison O' Regan

The first meeting of the Working Group took place in February 2012. The group was briefed on draft gap analysis and agreed to conduct consultation within their respective faculties. Information was returned from the Working Group during the period March/April 2012. The quantity and quality of the feedback reflected the tremendous work and commitment of the working group. The feedback reflects comments from 30 participants and is representative of both researchers and PI's across each of the four faculties. The feedback was then collated and reflected in the action plan.

The Steering Group met in April 2012 to review the draft gap analysis. Further suggestions and revisions were made to the gap analysis following this review. Following on from this the draft action plan was collated based on the actions outlined in the gap analysis. This was reviewed by both the Working Group and the Steering Committee in prior to final agreement and submission to the EU.

The University of Limerick HR Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R): Key Recommendations

The key recommendations arising from the gap analysis review at the University of Limerick are outlined below under each of the four main key headings; ethical & professional aspects; recruitment; working conditions & social security and training.

Ethical & Professional Aspects: Key Recommendations

- Update the researcher induction processes, both centralised induction and that given by supervisors/managers, to incorporate information on UL's research-relevant policies and practices. Introduce induction checklists to ensure all relevant topics are covered.
- Update researcher information resources, such as internal websites, guidelines and training programmes, to ensure UL's research-relevant policies and practices are clearly documented in a visible manner. Provide search facility to allow easy access to such information.
- Update UL policies and practices as appropriate, based on the outcomes of national initiatives, e.g. the IUA national code of conduct for research ethics and integrity, the national IP framework.
- Update ethics guidelines, and corresponding training, to provide clarity on relationships between the various ethics approval committees, in particular those at UL and the HSE.
- Examine potential mechanisms to improve the ethics review and approval process, including possible mechanisms to simplify/expedite the process, and mechanisms for two-way feedback/exchange between researchers and the approval committees.
- Implement consistent guidelines on the collection, use and retention of data for research purposes, once the new regulations on this subject are finalised. Provide guidelines and training on procedures to ensure research data is secure and reliably backed-up.
- Examine potential mechanisms to assist researchers in understanding commonly used contractual terms and conditions, such as guideline documents, help-desk services, etc.
- Explore mechanisms to streamline researcher processes, including those relating to accountability and authorisation.
- Develop strategy for compliance with data protection guidelines, including addressing issues such as open-plan workspaces, data retention requirements exceeding student/staff time at the university
- Provide training for researchers in public engagement activities, including media training.
- Identify mechanisms and supports for researchers to engage in public dissemination, such as through the UL press office, and through the creation of a community forum to allow research findings to be shared with the broader community (e.g. public lecture series)
- Complete EU project to examine role of women in research
- Monitor recruitment statistics for all areas of equality
- Provide on-line diversity training, to complement existing diversity training programme
- Examine mechanisms to provide for replacement of staff on research projects during situations of sick leave or maternity leave

- Evaluate effectiveness of implementation of the PDRS system for the research community, including PI involvement in this system. PDRS system should include focus on future career development of researchers.
- Identify mechanisms/opportunities to reward outstanding research performance.

Recruitment: Key Recommendations

- The Research Careers and Development Framework needs to be communicated effectively to applicants/new hires to ensure realistic career expectations are created with researchers from the beginning of the employment relationship and that they are aware of the support mechanisms available to them. This framework also needs to be communicated to current staff and PI's.
- Additional sources of international recruitment need to be reviewed to ensure the University of Limerick obtains the best candidate for the role.
- Support for mobility for researchers to be provided via centralised readily available information. Consider possibility of external placements and the development of further support mechanisms for mobility. Review researcher intake with international experience and act on this as appropriate.
- Appropriate recruitment training for selection board members needs to be undertaken and mechanisms to increase uptake on training need to be identified.
- Ensure continued improvement of recruitment process including reviewing and communicating the research recruitment procedures and updating recruitment guidelines and supporting documentation/resources as appropriate.
- Review advertisements to ensure that requirements are in line with the role, ensuring that they are correctly labelled and in line with appropriate salary scales.

Working Conditions and Social Security: Key Recommendations

- Develop the recognition of researchers by reviewing the access researchers have to participate in relevant decision making bodies within the University of Limerick. Take appropriate action as a result of this review.
- Ensure all relevant policies/research support initiatives are communicated clearly to research staff and PI's through a series of briefing sessions/training initiatives. Review policies annually, taking best international practice into account.
 - Research Careers & Development Framework
 - Research Contract Management Policy
 - Job Evaluation for Researchers
 - Research Role Profiles
 - Career Support Seminars / 1-1 Career Coaching
 - Research Recruitment Policies
 - Performance Development Review Process
 - Intellectual Property Rights
 - Dignity & Respect Training
- Continue review of health and safety as part of the HR Division's ISO quality system
- The University of Limerick is participating in an EU project FESTA (Female Empowerment in Science & Technology Academia) with aim of identifying barriers to progression for female academics, and to identify suitable actions to deal with this. In conjunction with this project review recruitment data for equality statistics and take appropriate action.

- Ensure information in relation to benefits for researchers such as salary scales, pensions, increments and payments for teaching are readily available and communicated to research staff. Benchmark salaries annually and take appropriate action
- Continue to review IP management within the University of Limerick and identify opportunities for improvement by reviewing disputes arising. Consider the possibility of a simply guide to IP, separate to the policy. Undertake initiatives to support broader knowledge transfer in relation to IP.
- Continue to introduce and encourage flexible work practices such as shorter working year.
- Review resources available to researchers including IT equipment (visio/equipment for remote collaboration) and space allocation (Buildings & Estates) and take steps to improve same.
- Communicate the research contract management policy clearly to research staff at induction training. Ensure researchers have clear expectations in relation to their contracts of employment and PIs are aware of their responsibilities to communicate with researchers. Support researchers in their own career development through career development training / PDR process, in which discipline specific research training needs can be identified. Consider further initiatives to improve employment conditions of research staff.
- Draft and communicate guidelines on authorship to all faculties.

Training: Key Recommendations

- As a follow on from the Research Careers Framework implement training to support both the researcher and the supervisor in their roles. This should outline their roles/responsibilities and supports available to them.
- Develop a mentoring/coaching scheme for researchers, particularly for early stage researchers.
- Provide training for PI's in mentoring and managing post-docs. Develop a briefing document for PhD supervisors to act as a guide in relation to frequency of meetings, level of support required etc.
- Consider possibility of financial provision for discipline-specific training for researchers
- Provide ongoing IP management training to research staff. Consider introducing specialist induction for social sciences / humanities including application of IP policies and rights.
- Support the continued professional development of research staff by developing and promoting a comprehensive training schedule. Encourage research staff to consider and plan for their future careers via the careers support seminars, one-to-one coaching, PDR process and other initiatives as may be deemed appropriate.
- Review international research training initiatives and adopt key leanings of this. Identify creative ways to actively advertise and encourage take up of training initiatives.