

# Action Plan - HRS4R - Human Resources Strategy for Researchers

## The St. Pölten UAS in the HRS4R Process

Within the framework of its Strategy 2021, the St. Pölten UAS committed itself to participating in the HRS4R process. On 31 January 2019, the UAS received the confirmation from EURAXESS for signing the 40 principles of the “European Charter for Researchers” and the “Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers” on the part of the Executive Board, and the process “Human Resources Strategy for Researchers - HRS4R” to achieve the logo for excellence in research was thus launched. For the first year, also referred to as the initial phase, the Executive Board commissioned a project which was carried out under the leadership of the head of the service unit Human Resources and Legal Affairs and involved many stakeholders, researchers and research services. An independent board made up of internal and external members monitored the process.

## The St. Pölten UAS in the Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences Landscape and the European Higher Education Area

The University of Applied Sciences Studies Act (FHStG), which came into force on 1 October 1993 and is less deterministic than the Universities Act, forms the legal basis and the framework for the Austrian universities of applied sciences system. Since 1999, the European Higher Education Area (“Bologna Process”) consisting of 48 countries has been accompanying the integration of universities in Europe and thus the development of the FHStG as well.

The accreditation of universities of applied sciences is regulated primarily in the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The responsible accreditation authority is the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria) which resides with the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research. When it comes to research, universities of applied sciences tend to focus on application-related research and development. R&D is oriented towards the demands and challenges of the companies and the practical realm. The obligation to carry out R&D is anchored in the FHStG. Universities of applied sciences are accredited only if the research and development efforts required to reach the institution’s objectives and ensure compliance with its principles are carried out by members of the teaching and research staff. Furthermore, the providers are to make sure that the teaching and research staff participate in application-oriented research and development work. Teaching activities are to be carried out by teaching and research staff who are qualified in scientific, professional/practical and pedagogic/didactic terms. The federal government does not provide basic funding for R&D at universities of applied sciences. Austrian universities of applied sciences have no right to award doctorates as this right is still exclusively reserved to the universities.

## The St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences GmbH

The St. Pölten UAS is a key player in the Austrian higher education landscape and one of the most important employers in the region. Our university distinguishes itself by its future-oriented and steadily growing number of study programmes, a strong interdisciplinary collaboration, and the strength of its research. Current challenges require new ideas: our career model leaves room for joint ideas and individual growth. In addition to the intensive exchange within the UAS, we offer the ideal environment for interdisciplinary research due to our numerous national and international collaborations. Teaching, research and administration teams work together across disciplines. The St. Pölten UAS is therefore one of the most research-intensive universities of applied sciences in Austria.

### Action Plan

The St. Pölten UAS is one of the first universities of applied sciences in Austria to take on the challenge and subject itself to an internal review concerning the requirements of the principles laid down by EURAXESS in the Charter and the Code. The gap analysis carried out within the framework of the initial phase resulted in a number of measures which are to be implemented and have been subsumed under the topic clusters “Ethical and Professional Aspects“, “Recruitment and Selection“, “Working Conditions“ and “Training and Development“. The most important measures are described in the following.

Action 1	Cluster	Responsible Unit	Indicators / Targets	Timing
<b>Further development of a mentoring model</b>	Training and Development	UAS service unit Human Resources & Legal Affairs / Staff Development and UAS service unit Research & Knowledge Transfer	<p>At least three trainings for supervisors and mentors will be offered.</p> <p>A new concept of strategic career counselling will be completed and implemented.</p> <p>A concept of continuous mentoring will be completed and implemented.</p>	June 2022

A mentoring concept for researchers and supervisors that covers the entire UAS career path (and beyond) makes sense for several reasons and also corresponds with the objectives of the St. Pölten UAS: the establishment (and training) of mentors increases the personal connection to the UAS and lets the research group perceive the personal development of the individual researchers more consciously, which also facilitates the personnel planning.

Strategic career guidance is to take place primarily within the research group. For the purpose of systematisation, an exchange format is to be established in which heads of institutes and research groups and the UAS service units Human Resources & Legal Affairs and Research & Knowledge Transfer are involved, in particular to take on aspects that go beyond the research group and the UAS.

Furthermore, there are plans to introduce a continuous mentoring system (which has been systematically implemented only within the framework of the onboarding so far).

- Obligation to have mentors starting from the position of Junior Researcher in the career model of the St. Pölten UAS
- Further training in the areas of mentoring / guidance for experienced researchers

Action 2	Cluster	Responsible Unit	Indicators / Targets	Timing
<b>Further education for researchers</b>	Training and Development	UAS service unit Human Resources & Legal Affairs / Staff Development and UAS service unit Research & Knowledge Transfer	A systematic further training portfolio including a final certificate will be completed. The first seminars within the framework of the portfolio should take place.	Systematic further training portfolio will be completed by November 2021. The first seminars within the framework of the portfolio should take place by May 2022.

It also complies with the Strategy 2021 and the work programme / target agreement of Human Resources and Legal Affairs to offer more target group-specific training (also for researchers). In order to be able to consciously and systematically take on many aspects of the necessary qualifications and further development of the researchers, a systematic portfolio of further training courses will be proposed which consists of compulsory further education measures (internal processes, funding landscape, project management) and voluntary measures (e.g. management skills) and results in a certificate after a certain workload has been completed.

Action 3	Cluster	Responsible Unit	Indicators / Targets	Timing
Further development of the career model for teaching and research staff / description of functions	Training and Development	UAS service unit Human Resources & Legal Affairs / Staff Development, UAS service unit Research & Knowledge Transfer and UAS Board	A new version of the career model will be completed and implemented which takes all indicated measures into account.	March 2022
<p>The career model for the teaching and research staff of the St. Pölten UAS will be further developed with a stronger focus on the special requirements in the UAS sector regarding scientific, professional/practical and pedagogic/didactic qualifications (as laid down in the FHStG). Positions related to the research realm which have received too little attention so far (e.g. technicians, IT developers, etc.) will be defined in more detail and it will be examined whether they can be integrated into the career model.</p> <p>International, mobility and practical experience and teaching will be increasingly integrated into the career model and the instrument of quality agreements provided therein.</p>				

Action 4	Cluster	Responsible Unit	Indicators / Targets	Timing
<b>Recruiting</b>	Recruitment and Selection Training and Development	UAS service unit Human Resources & Legal Affairs / Recruiting / Staff Development and UAS Board	The recommendations of the working group with regard to the revision of the hearing process will be completed and submitted to the UAS Board for decision-making. The implementation and training of the hearing process will be completed. A concept for the use of new search strategies will be completed and implemented	Both concepts: September 2021 Implementation and Training: June 2022
<p>The recruiting process will be further developed. In this context, particular attention is paid to appointment procedures. As comprehensive quality features, the requirements of the scientific, professional/practical and pedagogic/didactic as well as individual qualifications and mobility experiences will be increasingly integrated into job advertisements, the career model and the catalogue of selection criteria in the hearing. Furthermore, the guidelines for the selection criteria regarding CVs with deviations in the chronological order will be developed further. Within the framework of the implementation phase, the search strategies will be optimised and adjusted to current trends. The OTM-R policy has been published and is to be further developed as needed.</p>				

Action 5	Cluster	Responsible Unit	Indicators / Targets	Timing
<b>Framework conditions</b>	Ethical and Professional Aspects	UAS service unit Research & Knowledge Transfer and UAS Board	<p>The further development of the Research LifeCycle including a new phase as an information and exchange gate will be completed.</p> <p>An assessment of the necessity of creating an ethics office and an ombudsman service will be completed and appropriate measures taken.</p>	December 2021
<p>The research processes are part of the UAS process landscape and thus also part of the "Management LifeCycle". The existing tools and processes are to be used better in the future in such a way that a platform for the exchange of contents and the evaluation of the conformity with the research strategies is available. The discussion and exchange regarding research topics and the associated freedom in the development of ideas as well as research questions and topics are to be stimulated even more, especially across the borders of institutes and departments and in exchange with external stakeholders. Within the framework of the revision and development of the existing process of project research, measures will be taken to promote early project support and visibility and enable an information and exchange platform and a compliance check with research strategies. The legal framework conditions determine a focus on applied research. On top of this, the St. Pölten UAS is committed to responsible research and innovation as well as mission-oriented research aimed at making an impact for society. This project resulted in the recommendation to review the necessity of creating a specific ethics and ombudsman service or to define and implement alternative measures.</p>				

Action 6	Cluster	Responsible Unit	Indicators / Targets	Timing
<b>Working conditions</b>	Working Conditions	UAS service unit Human Resources & Legal Affairs, Works Council and UAS service unit IT and Infrastructure	The plant-level agreement will be signed. A childcare concept will be finalised and implemented.	<p>New plant-level agreement at July 2020. Further measures will follow with the move to the new building in the autumn of 2021.</p> <p>Childcare concept: June 2022</p>

Despite fixed-term projects, the UAS offers more and more permanent employment contracts. In the universities of applied sciences sector, it will never be adequate to abolish fixed-term contracts completely: in the absence of basic research funding from the public sector, research within the framework of third party-funded projects – which can partly be relatively short-term – will always be at the centre of research activity. With the instrument of a Qualification Agreement – which is not yet widely used in the area of the UAS – an instrument aimed at further development, and thus also at medium-term career perspectives, has already been implemented. Measures to promote the compatibility of family and work – with special consideration for the needs of young researchers – will be integrated into the existing workplace health promotion project and further developed. Moreover, the UAS will implement additional measures within the framework of working conditions by improving data protection, the room situation and noise prevention in particular with the new building. In the course of the revision of the operational agreement 2020, the core work time will be abolished and thus flexibility increased.

Action 7	Cluster	Responsible Unit	Indicators / Targets	Timing
<b>Gender und diversity</b>	Recruitment and Selection Training and Development Working Conditions	Gender and Diversity Officer, UAS service unit Human Resources & Legal Affairs / Staff Development / Recruiting and Executive Officers	The "Research Lab" will be provided. The proportion of females in research will increase. The recommendations of the working group with regard to the revision of the hearing process (including the role of the Gender and Diversity Officer) will be completed and presented to the UAS Board for decision-making. Multipliers will be established. The first further training formats for management functions will be carried out.	Proportion of females: September 2023 Other targets: September 2021

With regard to the fact that there are only 25% women in research, the following measures are intended to increase the proportion of women. The UAS will offer management positions with the option of part-time to make it easier for women to harmonise work and family life. Moreover, the planned "Research Lab" as a course in the curriculum will also specifically address female students and inspire them for a career in research. The focus also needs to be put on measures that bring women into management and decision-making positions. Accompanying measures within the framework of further trainings for researchers, especially for management skills, as well as further training formats for the promotion of women in (future) management positions will be taken. Furthermore, the professionalisation of the hearing will be promoted, including a stronger integration of the Gender and Diversity Officer and stronger negotiating powers regarding the involvement in the decision-making process. Multipliers will be established to achieve an increased integration of gender and diversity topics into the organisational and process structure. In the future, the UAS intends to actively voice gender aspects in job advertisements in order to enhance visibility. People with disabilities are encouraged to apply.