EURAXESS RIGHTS

Human resources management strategy for researchers, including the Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

1. Background

In 2005, the European Commission sought to promote the attractiveness of research as a profession by enhancing researchers’ mobility and offering them real career opportunities (OJ L75/67 of 3/22/2005). To this end it published two documents, the ‘European Charter for Researchers’ and the ‘Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers’, setting out good practices for the recruitment of researchers and their employment and working conditions. ([http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/brochure_rights/eur_21620_en-fr.pdf]).

These documents are not binding on the various European organizations that employ researchers, but those that undertake to follow them commit to gradually align their operating methods on the objectives described in them. To help them, the EU has developed a diagnostic and monitoring tool called "The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers" ([http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/strategy4Researcher]). This tool consists of 5 steps to be undertaken by the organization:

1. Compare current practices with the objective ('gap analysis');
2. Publish on its website the broad outlines of this analysis and the action plan it has adopted;
3. Request the European Commission to acknowledge the strategy;
4. Establish, within the institution, a self-assessment after 2 years;
5. Seek an external evaluation after 4 years.

The EU's recognition of institutions that have begun implementing the strategy (see item 3 above) takes the form of a label which will in future encourage researchers to apply preferentially to these 'labelled' institutions.

Member institutions of CReF (Council of Rectors of Universities of the French Community) undertook in 2005 to follow the principles outlined in the charter and in the code of conduct for recruitment. The CReF has also sought to establish inter-university Euraxess working groups, chaired by the FNRS, as well as to have applications for the individual recognition of different universities introduced by the end of 2010.

2. Approach taken by the University of Mons

Along with the other CReF member institutions, the University of Mons (UMONS) has therefore been committed since 2005 to comply with the charter and the code of conduct.
Since then, various initiatives in line with the principles described in these two documents have been undertaken at UMONS:

- The Euraxess Mobility Centre has been set up for researchers. Specifically, the Centre assists incoming and outgoing researchers with the various administrative procedures (visa application, employment contract, formalities on arrival in Mons, opening a bank account, French courses for non-French speakers, etc.) and in finding temporary accommodation (http://portail.umons.ac.be/FR/universite/admin/aff_academiques/international/Pages/Euraxess.aspx).
- Since 2009 the UMONS Strategic Memorandum has contained various action lines in the direction of the principles for researcher recruitment and career management, and the University's self-assessment process. The status of the initiatives in the memorandum is reviewed at each Board of Directors meeting. These various actions were inspired by good principles, but were still pretty much one-off and unstructured.
- In 2010 the UMONS authorities set up a working group to establish in a specific and systematic manner an overall strategy for managing the University's human resources in the research area.

3. **Approach of the University of Mons working group**

The working group currently consists of:

- Mr C. Conti, Rector,
- Mr D. Vince, Administrator
- Mr P. Dubois, Vice-Rector for Research,
- Ms A. De Smedt, Director of the Research Administration and Promotion Department,
- Mr P. Dehombreux, Vice-Rector for International Relations,
- Ms I. Renato, Head of International Relations,
- Mr M. Demeuse Adviser to the Rector for Pedagogical Teaching Support,
- Ms A. Aubert, Quality Coordinator of the Faculty of Engineering,
- Ms A. Heldenbergh, Quality advisor to the Rector,
- M. S. Cianciotta, UMONS quality coordinator,
- Mr C. Delvosalle, Advisor to the Rector for Continuing Education,
- Ms P. Lorent, Head of Continuing Education
- Ms C. Gallez, Director of the Human Resources Department,
- Ms. C Boutique, Human Resources Department,
- Mr P. Leclère, FNRS Research Associate,
- Ms A.L. Hantson, permanent scientific staff member,
- Ms C. Dupont, contractual scientific staff member,

Four meetings were held between May and December 2010, aimed at:

- mapping the current application of the Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers in the University of Mons.
- proposing objectives and courses of action to secure the more complete implementation of these documents within the institution.
- gathering these points in a strategic document to be submitted successively to the Research Council, to the UMONS Board of Directors, and then the European Commission.

4. **Diagnosis**
In its recommendation of 11 March 2005 on the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, the Commission notes that "employers or funders of researchers have an overriding obligation to ensure that they meet respective national, regional or sectoral legislation requirements". In this respect, UMONS stresses that the legislation applicable to the universities of the French Community of Belgium is compatible with and anticipates the implementation of the vast majority of the principles of the Charter and Code. These include legislation on non-discrimination and protection of working conditions. However, improvements are desirable in respect of post-doctoral grantholders, maternity leave for contractual researchers (funding the pay supplements) and recognition of qualifications and academic careers, i.e.: equivalence of diplomas, recognition of existing pay scale status and financial seniority.

Moreover, the UMONS policy strategy includes a research component, structured around the overall goal of ensuring high level scientific production. To this end, the University has undertaken initiatives to support researchers in terms of institutional structure (strengthening the Research Administration and the Promotion Department - AVRE, development of a research self-assessment tool and an individual activity report for researchers, allocation of specific research-dedicated appropriations, researcher participation in decision-making bodies, etc.), researchers themselves (policy for the assessment and self-assessment of PhD students) and their scientific production (institutional repository of publications, assistance with publication and translation, etc.).

The particular role of AVRE is noteworthy insofar as its missions, directed at both the institution and individual researchers, includes not only looking for calls for tender, but also project development, assisting researchers with project monitoring, protection of research results, scientific communication and optimal exploitation of research results. This department is also involved, in an ongoing partnership with the 80 UMONS research departments and their 600 researchers in a search for the proper interaction and balance between freedom of research, ethical principles, contractual and legal obligations, professional responsibility and social commitment. Once again, the legal framework incorporates certain of these dimensions. It would appear, however, that information to researchers on these fundamental themes is insufficiently formalized and systematized and also that the full span of the services offered by AVRE is not yet sufficiently known within the university.

It is also important to emphasize the growing commitment of the University to the first (PhD) phase of researchers’ careers. The objective of improving the institution’s performance in the completion of doctoral theses is accompanied by initiatives to promote the recruitment of PhD students (promotion and financing) and improve their academic supervision (doctoral training and support for promoters and to 'young' faculties) through to the final defence of the thesis. International mobility, during both the doctoral and the post-doctoral period, remains an issue, in terms of enrichment of academic opportunities (mobility grants, exchange programs, virtual mobility, etc.), the establishment a standard joint supervision contract by the International Relations Office, and the proper consideration of foreign experience in subsequent recruitment procedures. Finally, the emphasis on PhD entry and completion needs to take into consideration the career opportunities available to PhDs. As at other universities, the outlook for stable employment for researchers at UMONS remains heavily dependent on the economic context.

Finally, the diversity of the prevailing legislation within universities complicates the equal treatment of researchers. In addition, the rules set by these institutions may at times collide with the desire to harmonize or to promote research careers by making them more attractive. The existence of different practices within the two former institutions (FPMS-UMH) creates an additional difficulty. On this last point, various working groups have been created within UMONS, aimed at developing a set of common practices and procedures that comply with legal requirements and
make life easier for researchers. In this context, certain tools have already been introduced (HR guide, etc.) and others are in preparation.

5. **Objectives and possible avenues of action**

Given the above diagnosis, the University considers it relevant and necessary to broaden its commitments to the Charter and Code in the field of human resource management in the research area by pursuing initiatives structured around five themes:

1. Strengthening the ethical, societal and professional dimensions contributing to quality research.
   - Developing a short *Vademecum* guide for Researchers, incorporating a 'research administration' section, a 'human resources' section (based on the current HRD guide) and a 'researcher ethics and responsibilities' section outlining the legal position and that of the institution on freedom of research, ethical principles, contractual and legal obligations, professional responsibility and commitment to society.
   - Giving consideration to the ethical, societal and professional dimensions, in conjunction with research quality, in the UMONS quality charter.
   - Developing, in partnership with the Assembly of the UMONS Scientific Body (CorSci), the 'mentorship' of young PhD students by senior ones and by confirmed UMONS researchers to permit judicious accompaniment of this first phase in an incipient research career.
   - Promoting the consideration of the ethical, societal and professional dimensions in developing doctoral programs for PhD students.
   - Setting up an Ethical Standards Commission.

2. Improving information for potential candidates to ensure the transparency of our recruitment procedures.
   - Expanding the distribution channels for our job offers for researchers, for example via the 'Euraxess Jobs' website.
   - Completing the current 'Employment' page on the UMONS website to include information on:
     - different categories of researcher and the regulations and procedures governing their careers;
     - entry standards, terms of evaluation of applications;
     - general information on working and living conditions at UMONS and in Mons.
   - Pooling of selection resources and tools for for head of units in charge of recruiting.
   - Systematizing the preparation of a recruitment report (form) regardless of the type of position.

3. Enhancing our research capabilities by developing a proactive policy for foreign researchers as well as for disadvantaged groups.
   - Expanding the dissemination of our job offers to reach potential candidates from abroad.
   - More widely publishing the institution's position on non-discrimination, in particular of gender.
   - Informing applicants with disabilities of the relevant legislation as well as opportunities for special facilities within UMONS (link on the 'employment' page).
this context the 'Les Cèdres' non-profit organization in particular offers personalized educational support tailored to the nature of the disability.

- Identifying possible working arrangements (telecommuting, part-time work on a temporary basis, etc.) for personnel unable to work in normal conditions (illness, pregnancy, etc.).

4. Contributing to a better recognition of courses and qualifications.

- At CReF level, participating actively in the inter-university group identifying legal obstacles to full implementation of the Charter and Code.

- Internally:
  - finalizing work on harmonizing regulations and procedures for the recruitment, appointment and promotion of different staff categories.
  - permitting, by means of individual CVs and activity reports, better formalization and visibility of academic paths and individual achievements.
  - supporting the management of the teams in the research departments by developing evolving function profiles.
  - supporting and valorizing mobility (stays abroad, work experience outside research, virtual mobility, etc.).

5. Supporting researchers' career development.

- Providing financial support for post-doctoral stays abroad.

- Continuing the use of 'Stop-gap contracts' for researchers applying for research positions in bodies like the FNRS. In partnership between HRD and Continuing Education, improving access to research training and continuous development, including centralizing internal training opportunities and highlighting the available training in 'horizontal' skills (teaching, management, entrepreneurship, etc.).

- Further developing PhD-specific initiatives in line with the commitments made in the UMONS strategic memorandum.

- Stimulating a UMONS inter-faculty PhD student network.

A detailed action plan is given in Annexe 1.

6. **Methodology for deploying the strategy at the University of Mons**

A steering committee will be established in early 2011 within the University to ensure the implementation of the proposals contained in the present document. Particular attention will be paid to the feasibility of the procedures defined. It is essential that these contribute effectively to improving human resources management in the research area without inducing administrative overload either for the research services or the authorities concerned.

This committee will be chaired by Dr P. Dubois, Vice-Rector for Research and consist of:

- The Administrator
- The Quality Advisor to the Rector
- Three representatives of the Scientific Body
- One representative of the FRNS Researchers Committee
- Three representatives of the Administrative Departments (Human Resources, International Relations and Research Administration).

At the instigation of the Rector’s quality advisor, the University will, every two years, conduct its own self-assessment of the implementation of the strategy.
UMONS EURAXESS RIGHTS HRS4R – Action Plan
Annex 1 to Chapter 5

Please note that the table will be regularly reviewed. Timing and Leadership assigned may be changed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> Strengthening the ethical, societal and professional dimensions contributing to quality research.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Developing a short <em>Vademecum</em> guide</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>October 2011 (October 2012 for ethical aspects)</td>
<td>Research Administration Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Expanding the UMONS quality charter</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>October 2011</td>
<td>Quality Advisor to the Rector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Developing the mentorship of young PhD students</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>October 2011 to set up the network. October 2013 to get a full mentorship program.</td>
<td>Parliament of the Scientific Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Developing doctoral programs for PhD students</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Vice-Rector for Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Setting up an Ethical Standards Commission</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Vice-Rector for Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> Improving information for potential candidates to ensure the transparency of our recruitment procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Expanding the distribution channels for job offers</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
<td>Human Resources Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Completing the current</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>October 2011 for categories</td>
<td>Human Resources Department</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2.3 Pooling of selection resources and tools for head of units in charge of recruiting
- **2012**: 2015 for general information.
- **Human Resources Department**

### 2.4 Systematizing the preparation of a recruitment report (form)
- **2012**: 2015
- **Human Resources Department** will initiate the action

### 3 Enhancing our research capabilities by developing a proactive policy for foreign researchers as well as for disadvantaged groups

#### 3.1 Expanding the dissemination of our job offers abroad
- **2011**: October 2011
- **Human Resources Department**

#### 3.2 Publishing the institution's position on non-discrimination
- **2011**: October 2011
- **Human Resources Department**

#### 3.3 Informing applicants with disabilities
- **2011**: October 2011
- **Human Resources Department**

#### 3.4 Identifying possible working arrangements
- **2011**: October 2012
- **Human Resources Department**

### 4 Contributing to a better recognition of courses and qualifications

#### 4.1 Actively participating in the inter-university group identifying legal obstacles
- **As soon as the group is created (which is out of UMONS responsibility)**: October 2013
- **Human Resources Department**

#### 4.2.1 Finalizing work on harmonizing regulations and procedures
- **2011**: Already done for the permanent academic and scientific staff. October 2013 for the non-permanent scientific staff.
- **Specific Work Group**

#### 4.2.2 Better formalization and visibility of academic paths and individual achievements
- **2011**: October 2011
- **Research Administration Department, Pedagogical Quality Assurance Department and IT Resources Départment**

#### 4.2.3 Supporting the management of the
- **2012**: 2015
- **Vice-Rector for Research**
### Supporting researchers' career development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2.4</th>
<th>Supporting and valorizing mobility</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>International Relations Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Supporting researchers' career development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Providing financial support for post-doctoral stays abroad</td>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Vice-Rector for Research (along with Scientific Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Continuing the use of 'Stop-gap contracts'</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vice-Rector for Research (along with Scientific Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Improving access to research training and continuous development</td>
<td>2011 for English and pedagogical trainings; 2013 for other areas.</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Parliament of the Scientific Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Further developing PhD-specific initiatives</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Vice-Rector for Research (along with Scientific Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Stimulating a UMONS inter-faculty PhD student network</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Research Administration Department, Parliament of the Scientific Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>