HRS4R 2025 Report

Interim internal review

May 2025

Cyprus
University of
Technology

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1. Introduction

The European C&C

The Cyprus University of Technology (CUT) welcomes and supports the recommendation of the European Commission on "The European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers". An endorsement letter to this purpose was sent to the European Commission in 2022, thus commencing CUT the HRS4R Journey.

The **European Charter for Researchers** is a set of general principles and requirements which specifies the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and/ or funding bodies of researchers. It constitutes a framework for researchers, employers and funders which invites them to act responsibly and as professionals within their working environment, and to recognise each other as such.

The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers consists of a set of general principles and requirements that should be followed by employers and/ or funders when appointing or recruiting researchers. In addition, **Open, Transparent and Merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) policies** must be implemented, aiming at making research careers more attractive, while facilitating mobility and equal opportunities for all candidates.

Employers and/ or funders must embrace the C&C via the development of an **HRS4R (HR Strategy for Researchers).**

The HRS4R process involves 3 stages as follows:
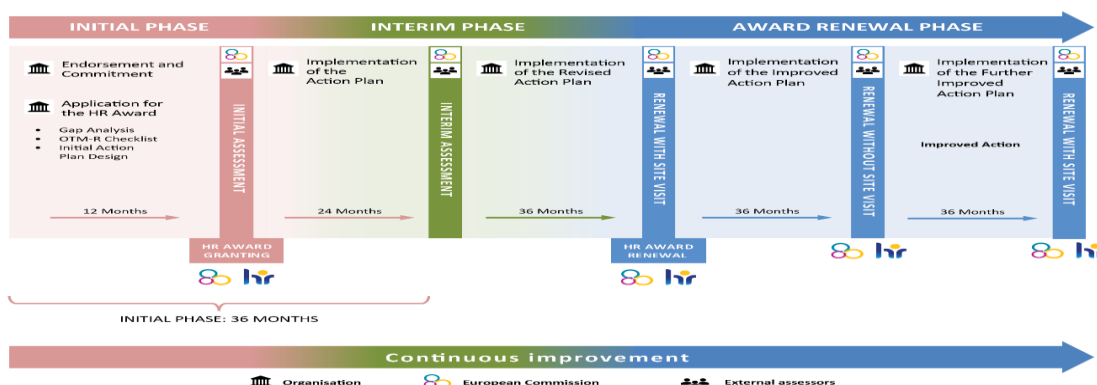
HRS4R@CUT

CUT has been awarded the **"HR Excellence Award"** by the European Commission in April 2023. The award indicates CUT's progress towards the alignment of its policies and practices with the C&C and OTM-R principles. The initial phase comprises of the Gap Analysis, the OTM-R Check-list and the Action Plan for the period 2023-2025.

Two years after the initial granting of the Award, CUT enters **the Interim Phase** for the period 2023-2025, via the Interim Assessment.

This report describes in detail, CUT's implementation of the Action Plan developed at the Initial Phase. It also entails the progress CUT has made towards the alignment of the principles of the C&C and OTM-R principles, by analysing its strengths and weaknesses under each of the four (4) Pillars. Finally, reference is made to CUT's Extended Action Plan for the next 36 months (2025-2028), the expected implementation and monitoring procedure as well as the preparation for the External Review (Renewal Phase) at the end of the 3-year period.

2. Organisational information

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE 2024
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research	361,52
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	86,96
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)	70,35
Of whom are women	154,65
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.	303,99
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level	13,48
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level *	19,49
Total number of students (if relevant)	3166
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)	919,92
RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	**€**
Total annual organisational budget	100.911.679
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	2.136.000
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	12.656.665
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	215.068

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (in brief)
CUT is one of the three Cyprus public universities, a member of the European University of Technology (EUt⁺), and internationally distinguished in the area of research excellence: https://www.cut.ac.cy/university/about/university-profile/?languageId=1 https://www.cut.ac.cy/university/about/vision-mission-values/ CUT has six main strategic pillars: 1. Education 2. Research, Innovation, and Knowledge Transfer 3. Social Contribution 4. Internationalisation 5. Governance and Administration 6. Infrastructure and Resources CUT has seven Faculties, fifteen Academic Departments, the Academy of Hospitality and Tourism and the Language Center. It is supported by eight Administrative Services. The Board (Council), the Senate, and the Rector's Council are the three main responsible decision-making bodies of the University. The two main categories of CUT researchers are: Permanent Teaching and Research Staff (PTR) and Researchers on Fixed Term Contracts (RFT).

3. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

▬ Pillar 1 – Ethical and professional aspects

Research activity is governed by Research Activity and Start Up funds Policies.

CUT adopts the University of Cyprus (UCY) Regulations for professional and ethical conduct and disciplinary procedures. CUT Research Ethics and Deontology Committee developed good research practices. A Deontology and Ethics Code (Core Values/Code of Ethics in Academia), Rules for Deontology and good practice and Anti-bribery and corruption policy were established.

The CUT Recruitment and Research Regulations and Policies platform was upgraded to INFO@CUT. It is continuously updated and used for induction and trainings.

CUT complies with The Safety and Health at Work Law 89(I)/1996, the GDPR Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and National L.125(I)/2018. A Data Protection Officer was appointed, a Personal Data Protection Policy was approved and a designated GDPR section is in CUT Website. Several events are organized i.e. Cybersecurity Awareness Day'.

CUT has an IT and Technology Systems Security Policy for the protection of IT systems and the users. **The training on Cybersecurity is ongoing and a Disaster Recovery plan is under development (Actions 26-27).**

Dissemination and exploitation of results is essential at CUT. In 2023, an IPR officer was recruited and the IPR office was set up. The IPR Policy was updated. **The University has registered as a spoke to receive knowledge transfer support services by the CKTO and RIF (Action 23). Researchers at CUT will receive training for knowledge transfer, commercialization and entrepreneurship (Action 24). The University is currently in the process of developing an Open Science Policy (Action 25). The approval of the modification of the legislation for the creation of spin offs by the Parliament is pending.**

CUT researchers aim to have direct engagement with the public regarding their research activities, via various events i.e. Researcher's Night, Summer Academies for students. **CUT will publish a research report for the public, will organize interdisciplinary networking workshops and will develop a policy for the utilization of research laboratories by business community. The Open University Lectures initiative will be continued (Actions 28-31).**

CUT aims to build a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion. It has established an Equality committee and the Diversity and Inclusion Office. Relevant actions and initiatives derive from the Equality Plan (2022-2024) and the Equality and Equal Access Plan (2025-2028) (Actions 32-34). Emphasis was given on the importance and use of inclusive language. The **Code for the prevention and combat of bullying, sexual harassment and harassment will be revised to improve effectiveness (Action 35). CUT is in the process of applying for Accreditation as a Gender Equality Employer (Action 36).**

There is a formal PTR evaluation procedure which involves external independent members in the Committees. **The mechanism for the provision of feedback by students for PTR involved in teaching will be upgraded for the continuous improvement of teaching and learning outcomes (Action 37).** CUT has recently established a Policy for Feedback/Appraisal for RFT. PhD students submit an annual review on work progress which determines the continuation or discontinuation of their studies.

▬ Remarks

All actions included in the Action plan 2023-2025 in this pillar were completed, with the exemption of the following:

- the institution of ambassadors (Action 6) due to change of scope and new priorities set by the new Equality and Equal Access Plan, and

- the modification of existing legislation for the creation of spin offs (Action 3), which is not in the University's control as it is subject to examination and approval by the Cyprus Parliament.

In addition, the IPR officer hired in 2023 recently resigned to pursue a different career path abroad. A new recruitment procedure will be initiated and until a new officer is recruited, the IPR office is run by another officer in Research Services.

The new actions in the Extended Action Plan (2025-2028) derive mainly from the new Strategic Plan 2023-2030 and the priorities set by the Rectorate and various University Units (Administrative Services, Academic Faculties and Departments, Diversity and Inclusion Office etc.).

Pillar 2 – Recruitment and selection

CUT's OTM-R policy ensures the alignment of the C&C with the recruitment of CUT researchers.

All positions are open and published at CUT Webpage. PTR positions are published in Greek and English in Cyprus Government Gazette, 4 national newspapers, www.jobs.ac.uk and social media, while RFT positions may be additionally advertised in national newspapers and international platforms. A strong recommendation is made for announcements to be published in English and EURAXESS.

The announcements include information on Position, Unit, specialisation, salary, start date and application procedure. Qualifications are linked to the Position: for PTR there is a link to CUT Legislation on Qualifications per Rank, while RFT announcements refer to qualifications based on category and R1-R4 profiles (European Framework for research careers). There are links to equality policies, opportunities for research and mobility, career development and professional development. Candidates are informed of the next steps and estimated timeframe.

PTR candidates have 3 months to submit their application via the e-recruiting platform, receive automated confirmation and can download their application for transparency. Similarly, an electronic form was developed for RFT positions with a minimum timeframe of 2 weeks for the submission of applications.

CUT complies with the University of Cyprus (Election, Evaluation and Upgrading of Academic Staff) Regulations and the Code of Practice for the Composition of Special Committees for the Election and of Academic Staff (PTR). The Committee comprises of 5 specialists including external members from at least 2 countries (excluding Cyprus). The members declare potential conflict of interest with candidates. The same Committee evaluates applications, nominates candidates and conducts the interviews. Decisions are justified in Evaluation Reports approved by CUT. Based on CUT Rules, the

Committee for RFT comprises of 3 internal members. A recommendation was sent to CUT Community for gender balance in selection committees and the template for the proposal of Committee members for PTR was modified.

PTR candidates receive minimum 3 weeks-notice for interview and RFT candidates a minimum of one week-notice.

The selection process considers the whole range of experience of the candidates. Depending on the position and category/rank (and for RFT corresponding R1-R4 profiles), a wide range of evaluation criteria are considered, focusing on the person's overall achievements. Career breaks/ variations in chronological order of CVs is not considered a disadvantage; candidates are requested to submit proof of qualifications. Mobility experience/ international and professional mobility has been added as an advantage in all RFT announcements. A video was developed on the prevention of unconscious bias and discrimination in recruitment and selection for Selection Committees.

All candidates are informed of the outcome. PTR candidates receive an extract of the Committee's Report on their and the selected candidate's application, while RFT candidates receive further feedback if requested. A timeframe of maximum 1 month from the completion of the selection procedure was set for rejection letters to PTR and RFT candidates.

▬ Remarks

Based on the Action Plan 2023-2025, all the actions regarding recruitment and selection were completed and incorporated in the OTM-R policy for Researchers developed, published and communicated to CUT Community.

The implementation of the existing e-recruitment platform for PTR positions seemed difficult to implement for RFT positions, due to limited resources and the need for maintenance. An electronic form was developed instead for the submission of applications to which the PC and other committee members have direct access.

In addition, training was undertaken regarding the OTM-R policy for Researchers to HR Services. The OTM-R policy together with the video on how to prevent unconscious bias and discrimination in selection procedures is sent to all Chairs of Selection Committees and to the Secretary Office of the relevant Department for PTR positions.

Training on unconscious bias and discrimination was not undertaken in the years 2022-2024 due to other initiatives towards the development and promotion of an equality and inclusiveness culture at CUT.

Pillar 3 – Working conditions

CUT promotes a stimulating research environment. PTR can recruit RFT and purchase infrastructure via the Start-Up Fund and can use the Research Activity Fund for networking, conferences and workshops abroad. **"PUMP PRIMING" programs, and Interdisciplinary research programs will be reinforced (Actions 38-39).**

CUT complies with the National L.98(I)/2003 for Employees on fixed term contract. RFT work on a project basis but under the same employment conditions as permanent staff. **CUT will reinforce internal funding to combat the feeling of insecurity among RFT and promote their continuous employment (Action 40).**

All researchers receive attractive and equal pay and fair social insurance coverage. RFT's salary is not discontinued during maternity and paternity leave.

In the frame of the Equality Plan (2022-2024) and Equality and Equal Access Plan (2025-2028), various initiatives have been undertaken aiming at an equal policy in Recruitment and subsequent career stages. CUT recommends gender balance in Selection Committees and has developed a video on how to avoid unconscious bias and discrimination in selection procedures.

PTR's career path is predetermined by UCY Regulations. RFT are assigned a Project Coordinator (PC) who acts as their mentor, providing guidance for project goals achievement and professional development. This role is enhanced via the Feedback/Appraisal policy for RFT. For PhD students, the Academic Advisor acts a Mentor.

Mobility at CUT is an important means of enhancing scientific knowledge and professional development for researchers, achieved via ERASMUS and MSCA Programs. **New Initiatives by the EUt⁺ to further enhance mobility include the European Graduate Research School (EGRS), the development of Research Institutes (ERIS) and Groups (ERGs) and the Entrepreneurial School (Actions 41-43).**

CUT offers career advice and job placement to researchers via the EUROPE DIRECT Center, Careers Office and the Learning and Development Network (LDN) i.e. Youth Talks. **Via the ECROs EU Project, structured career guidance services will be established for ESR (Action 44).**

An IPR office was set up and the IP Policy has been revised. **CUT has registered as a spoke to provide knowledge transfer services within the University (Action 23). The approval of the modification of the legislation for the creation of spin offs by the Parliament is pending.**

The Strategic Plan 2023-2030 has prioritised academic excellence in teaching and learning. The LDN has established the constitution of seminars from distinguished experts on subjects like student-centred approach. **It will continue to provide the program for Pedagogical education and teaching methodology, together with toolkits on best and innovative teaching practices and learning theories (Actions 45-47).**

CUT adheres to the UCY Disciplinary Regulations, while disputes are resolved via Mediation by the Department of Labour Relations or by the Cyprus Labour Court and/or by the Supreme Cyprus Court. **CUT Disciplinary regulations are in the process of being approved by the Cyprus Parliament.** Initiatives regarding internal conflict resolution have been established i.e. 'Student Ombuds'. **CUT will introduce a new constitution of 'Ombuds' for academic staff, including researchers (Action 48).**

▬ Remarks

All actions in the Action plan 2023-2025 in this pillar were completed except the following:

- the modification of existing legislation for the creation of spin offs (Action 3) and the issue of CUT Disciplinary Regulations (Action 20) which are not in the University's control as they are subject to examination and approval by the Cyprus Parliament, and

- the electronic global timesheet system (Action 19), due to change of scope. The new Rectorate decided to focus on the 1st aspect of the project which involves the automation of the procedure for internal submission and approval of requests for the employment of RFT. The project proved to be challenging and more complex than originally estimated. Also, it was time consuming and difficult to complete due to limited resources. A project manager was assigned and a new timeframe has been set.

All new actions in this pillar derive from the emphasis given on providing a stimulating environment to Researchers at CUT, including RFT and on the improvement of their working conditions.

Having the Strategic Plan 2023-2030 and priorities set as well as the key principles of the C&C as a compass, the actions mainly focus on:

- professional development, specifically with regards to academic excellence in teaching and learning, and

- mobility and training opportunities of researchers at all levels within the EUt[+].

▬ Pillar 4 – Training and development

For each Research Project (internally or externally funded) a Project Coordinator (PC) is assigned. Respectively, an Academic Advisor is assigned to each PhD student.

A constructive, structured and regular relationship is established between RFT with their supervisor (PC). This is achieved by working within agreed schedules and deliverables and preparing Project Progress reports. Time spent on external funded projects is recorded in Timesheets.

PTR have a multi-faceted role including mentorship and supervision. Their role and the relationship established with the RFT are essential for transfer of knowledge and most importantly for the career development of RFT. This constitutes one of the evaluation criteria for their election and upgrade. The role of PC and the relationship described above with RFT in their team is reinforced via the new Feedback Policy for RFT.

In general, there are vast opportunities for all researchers, at all career stages, for professional development, though access to measures for continuous development of skills and competencies and via their teaching and research activities.

Researchers can participate:

- in national, European or international conferences via the Start Up Fund Policy, Research Activity Policy or Internally and Externally funded projects, with the prerequisite of disseminating research results, and

- in networking meetings and educational seminars/workshops via the Research Activity Fund and Interdisciplinary programs.

The University has institutionalised and reinforced the Learning and Development Network (LDN). The focus of the LDN will be on providing continuous training and guidance as well as the development of competencies of CUT community, as follows:

- **Training on academic excellence in teaching and learning, as analysed in Pillar 3 (Actions 45-47).**

- **Continuous training and guidance to PhD students and RFT on writing and promoting their doctoral thesis, research proposals and publications via interactive workshops, seminars, networking events, toolkits and the Writing Retreat planned for 2027 (Actions 49-52).**

- **Development of general competencies for CUT community, including RFT i.e.** E-camp day, psychological empowerment, **mental resilience,** UpperskillingCUT **etc.**

The EUt⁺ has the professional development of researchers as a priority and therefore will proceed with initiatives towards this direction, such as the EGRS, ERIS, ERGS, Entrepreneurial school analysed in Pillar 3 (Actions 41-43).

The newly established Centre for Lifelong Learning will enhance initiatives towards the continuous professional development of CUT community and society (Action 53).

Furthermore, the University will proceed with the 4th call of the POST-DOCTORAL Program to attract and support new distinct scientists at postdoctoral level, to promote their creativity and innovation as well as advance their scientific and professional development (Action 54).

▬ **Remarks**

The action related to the development of an electronic global timesheet is the only action extended in this Pillar, for the reasons already analysed in Pillar 3 (Action 19).

The Extended Action Plan 2025-2028 focuses on a great extend to actions related to principles incorporated in Pillar 4 with regards to training and professional development.

A lot of opportunities arise for PhD Students and researchers at CUT at all career stages for continuous professional development, based on the:

- priorities of the Strategic Plan 2023-2030,

- reinforcement and institutionalisation of the LDN,

- newly established Center for Lifelong learning, and

- Initiatives of EUt$^+$.

4. Additional questions

▬ **Have any of the priorities for the short and medium term changed?**

After the award of the HR Excellence in Research in April 2023, the priorities set in the Action Plan 2023-2025 in general remained the same. During the implementation of the Action Plan 2023-2025, some actions had a change of scope and were differentiated, such as the global timesheet, ambassadors and e-recruiting.

New priorities were set, which did not directly affect the implementation of the Action Plan 2023-2025. On the contrary, they led to new positive initiatives which added to the strengths of the university with reference to the principles of the C&C (analyzed in strengths and weaknesses of the 4 Pillars) e.g. the priority set for Accreditation of CUT as a Gender Equality employer which led to the decision to continue RFT salary during maternity and paternity leave and to the Feedback Policy for RFT.

▬ **Have any of the circumstances in which your organization operates changed and as such have had an impact on your HR strategy?**

Since the award of the HR Excellence in Research in April 2023, a new Rectorate was elected in January 2024.

A revised CUT Strategic Plan was developed for the period 2023-2030 with priorities set on an annual basis. It is important to note, however, that the HRS4R remained a key priority within the Plan.

The new Rectorate influenced the HRS4R since there was a change of scope for some actions in the Action Plan 2023-2025, i.e. electronic global timesheet, e-recruiting for RFT.

In addition, new priorities were set according to the Strategic Plan 2023-2030, which had an impact on the Extended Action Plan 2025-2028 contributing to the HRS4R initiatives for a more stimulating research environment and opportunities for mobility and professional development, as well as emphasis on equality and equal access, including among others:

- the institutionalization and reinforcement of the Learning and Development Network (LDN),

- the establishment of the Center for Lifelong Learning,

- the development of the Diversity and Inclusion Office,

- the formation of the EUt$^+$ Research Office (ERO),

- the submission of the application for the accreditation of the University as a Gender Equality Employer, and

- the participation in international rankings related to sustainable development, specifically the QS Sustainability Rankings and the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings.

Furthermore, the new Vice- Rector for Academic Affairs obtained the overall supervision of the project. The Steering Committee, which at the initial phase was the Senate Committee of Research and Innovation, changed due to its abolishment by the new Rectorate. The role of the Steering Committee at the implementation phase was assigned to the Rector's Council.

In addition, based on the EU recommendation, the Ad-hoc committee, comprising of representatives of researchers at all career stages, was enhanced with additional members, particularly with Early Stage Researchers (R1) to gain additional insight to their perspective. This Ad-hoc Committee, which was set to be the HRS4R Implementation Committee at the implementation phase, changed to Advisory Committee.

▬ Are any strategic decisions under way that may influence the action plan?

It is important to note that priorities in the Strategic Plan 2023-2030 are set by the Rectorate on an annual basis. Priorities for the following years are yet to be set and this may affect both the actions and the timeframes included in the Extended Action Plan (2025-2028). Similarly, in alignment with the strategic priorities, the strategic plans of individual University units may also be differentiated, having an impact on the action plan.

Furthermore, the following strategic decisions under way, may influence the action plan of CUT HRS4R:

- The actions deriving from the Strategic Pillar in Digital transformation incorporated in the Strategic Plan 2023-2030.
- New Research Units on 'Public Health' and on 'Digital Cultural Heritage' to be established in the near future, subject to approval by the Parliament.
- Strategic initiatives originating from EUt⁺.
- Development of the Science and Technology Park in Limassol.
- Approval of the modification of the legislation for the creation of Spin-offs by the Parliament.

Finally, new Rectorate to be elected in 2028 may influence the Strategic plan 2023-2030 and priorities set. Given that the extended Action Plan is for the period 2025-2028, we are optimistic that the change in Rectorate in January 2028 will not differentiate to a great extent the action plan and priorities set.

The working group will be in close contact and collaboration with the Rectorate and the University units and will monitor possible changes revising the action plan accordingly and as needed.

5. Actions

At the Interim Internal Review, CUT reports on the status of achievement of each of the actions planned in the initial phase (Action Plan 2023-2025) and adds new actions to be implemented in the next 36 months, via the development of the Extended Action Plan 2025-2028. It also provides an overview of the implementation of OTM-R Principles and of CUT OTM-R (Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment) Policy for Researchers developed.

Extended Action Plan for 2025-2028

The Extended Action Plan can be found at CUT HRS4R Webpage at: https://www.cut.ac.cy/strategy_for_researchers/action_plan/

OTM-R Policy for Researchers

CUT's OTM-R Policy for Researchers can be found at CUT HRS4R Webpage at: https://www.cut.ac.cy/strategy_for_researchers/otmr_policy/

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles

Since the HR Excellence Award in April 2023, CUT has developed an OTM-R policy for Researchers, which builds on the principles of the Code of Recruitment for Researches, providing detailed guidance on the various phases of the Recruitment and Selection for Researchers at all levels at CUT, while complying with relevant Legislation, Regulations and Rules binding the university.

<u>Advertising and application phase</u>

Announcements at CUT are according to approved templates and they comprise of all relevant information in the OTM-R Toolkit.

For vacancies related to PTR, announcements are kept concise including vital information on the rank(s) of the position, Unit, specialisation, salary, start date and application procedure, a link to Legislation for qualifications per rank and to CUT Webpage. Announcements use inclusive language and mention the Equal opportunity Policy adhered by CUT. They are published in both Greek and English language in Cyprus Government Gazette, national press, national and international platforms (www.jobs.ac.cy). Candidates, by law, have 3 months to submit their application via a newly-established e-recruiting platform which is also used for the selection procedure and correspondence with candidates. Candidates receive a confirmation email and can download their application for transparency purposes.

Similarly, announcements for RFT prepared by the Project Coordinator (PC), include all relevant information (see OTM-R Policy) and rely on Categories of Researchers and corresponding qualifications detailed in relevant Rules and also determined by Project Requirements. It is to the discretion of the PC to determine the language, the means of advertisement and submission date. Candidates used to apply by email and receive relevant confirmation.

Based on the OTM-R Policy, the following developments have been made, as detailed in OTM-R checklist and Action Plan 2023-2025:

- Announcement templates for both PTR and RFT positions have been modified to include links regarding Equality Policy and opportunities for research and mobility, career development and professional development.

- Deadline for the submission of applications for RFT is minimum 2 weeks from the announcement of the position.

- Via the announcements, candidates are informed of next steps and estimated timeframe of the selection procedure.

- An electronic form has been developed for the submission of applications, to which the PC and committee members have access.

- A strong recommendation is be made so that announcements for RFT positions are published in English and are uploaded on EURAXESS.

- Rules for RFT (Postgraduate associates, Postdoctoral researchers and Special Scientists for research) have been revised so that categories/subcategories correspond to R1-R4 profiles and competencies, according to the European Framework for research careers. Mobility experience/international and professional mobility is considered an advantage.

Evaluation and Selection phase

The appointment and composition of Selection Committees for PTR is clearly defined in Regulations as well as the Code of Conduct for the Composition of Committees for the election of Academic Staff. It is 5-member Committee comprised of both internal and external members, experts from at least 2 countries (excluding Cyprus). All members are obliged to declare potential conflict of interest with candidates. The same committee is involved in all stages of the procedure. All candidates are assessed and those nominated, proceed to interview. These are justified in reports signed by the Committee and approved by relevant University Bodies. The process is defined by transparency and equality since all candidates are assessed on criteria defined by Law. All candidates receive feedback at the completion of the process where by law additionally receive an extract from the Committee's Report with their strengths and weaknesses and corresponding strengths of the selected candidate. For RFT positions, Rules instruct that the Committee comprises of 3 internal members which screen all applications, conduct interviews and justify their decision in a report approved by the Rector's Council. All candidates are informed at the end of the procedure and receive further feedback if requested.

According to the OTM-R policy:

- RFT candidates are given a minimum of one weeks-notice for interview.

- Rejection letters must be sent within a month from the completion of the selection procedure.

- A complains mechanism has been included in the OTM-R policy.

- A recommendation is made to CUT Community for Gender Balance in Selection Committees where possible and the template for the proposition of committee members has been modified accordingly.

- The HR Services is trained on OTM-R.

- All chairs of Selection committees receive the OTM-R policy as well as the video on how to avoid unconscious bias and discrimination in recruitment and selection. The committee must watch the video before the evaluation of applications and before the interviews.

The implementation of OTM-R at CUT is ensured via a series of monitoring mechanisms:

- Legislation, Regulations and Policies are published and made known to CUT Community.

- Revised Rules and Policies according to the Action Plan and OTM-R practices are announced to CUT Community for immediate effect, are published and included in induction and training material.

- Selection Procedures are in line with National Legislation, CUT Legislation, Regulations and Policies.

- Responsible CUT Decision-making bodies monitor and approve the recruitment procedure at various stages and ratify Departmental and Faculty Departments' decisions as well as selection committees' decisions.

Further to the above, the assigned OTM-R WG reports progress to the HR4R WG and consequently to the Steering Committee, ensuring the implementation of OTM-R at CUT. CUT will continue to adhere to good practices of OTM-R and where necessary, introduce new developments to this purpose in the long run.

6. Implementation

▬ General overview of the expected overall implementation process of the action plan

HRS4R took the form of a project under the supervision of the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs (VRAA).

After the award of the HR Excellence in Research in April 2023, the Coordinator and members of the HRS4R Working Group (HRS4R WG), who remained the same, worked closely with, and kept the VRAA continuously informed on the progress of the project. The HRS4R WG Coordinator was responsible for the planning, coordination administration and follow up of implementation process.

The actions set in the Action Plan 2023-2025 were communicated to the corresponding responsible units with emphasis on the timeframes and indicators set. Progress towards the completion of these actions was carefully monitored by the HRS4R Coordinator and WG. The implementation of actions enabled the HRS4R to be embedded in the policies and practices of the University.

At the same time, the OTM-R WG was set up by the members of the HR Services (Recruitment office) with the same Coordinator as the HRS4R WG. The OTM-R WG monitored the implementation of OTM-R principles and indicators set. The HRS4R Coordinator informed the HRS4R WG on relevant progress and further actions, if required.

An Ad-hoc Committee was set up, comprising of members of the HRS4R WG and members of the Academic Staff, to align the Researcher categories/subcategories with the R1-R4 profiles of the European Framework for Research Careers. The revised RFT Rules were approved by the Steering Committee (Rector's Council), the Senate and the University's Council.

Changes deemed necessary for the smooth implementation of the project or changes required in actions originally set, were discussed and agreed with the VRAA and the Steering Committee (Rector's Council).

Progress and implementation of the Action Plan was reported every six months to CUT Secretary and Registrar for the Interim and annual review of the Strategic Plan of the HR services and Research Services, which have HRS4R as a key priority. Furthermore, progress was also reported every three months to the Senate and the Council by the VRAA with regards to HRS4R implementation. Finally, the HRS4R WG reported progress to the Steering Committee on regular intervals (3-6 months) and other University Bodies, as requested.

New developments derived from the implementation of the Action Plan were included in the various CUT official Reports i.e. Annual Progress Activity Reports by the Rectorate, the Equality Committee and the Diversity and Inclusion Office. CUT community was kept informed of new developments by the VRAA.

Evidence on new initiatives and new and revised policies was collected in a designated SharePoint to be used for the Interim Assessment and the monitoring of indicators.

Checklist on key issues in the implementation process

How have you prepared for the internal review?

As already analyzed above, the implementation of the Action Plan 2023-2025 was monitored on a regular basis by the HRS4R WG. Different colors where used according to the status of each action and modifications were made to: a) targets and indicators set, based on recommendations in the EU Consensus Report and b) timeframes, based on feedback received on progress by designated Responsible Units. Details, evidence, and results on indicators were added in the Remarks section.

Since the award of the HR Excellence in Research, the HRS4R WG recorded new initiatives introduced by the University which were added as strengths in the initial Gap Analysis under the 4 pillars and corresponding principles, to identify the current status of the University after the two-year period (2023-2025).

CUT Strategic Plan 2023-2030, as well as the contribution of the Ad-hoc Committee set up by representatives of Researches from all career stages (R1-R4) were a valuable contribution to the identification of actions incorporated in the Extended Action Plan 2025-2028.

The HRS4R WG agreed actions with key organisation Units e.g. LDN, Center for Lifelong Learning, the Diversity and Inclusion office, EUT⁺ and Administrative Services, before presenting the final Extended Action Plan to the Steering Committee. Actions were analysed, with timeframes and indicators set.

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

The research community at CUT was involved in the implementation of the HRS4R via the Responsible Units and various CUT Committees in which they participate, which were required to approve various policies or revision of existing policies/ practices based on the actions detailed in the Action Plan.

These include the Steering Committee (Rectors' Council), the Senate, the Council.

New developments deriving from HRS4R were communicated to University members by the VRAA for immediate implementation. Decisions taken by researchers in Departmental and Faculty Councils were aligned with the new or revised policies and Rules communicated the VRAA.

Researchers were involved in the revision of RFT Rules for RFT (R1-R4 profiles) which were consequently approved by the Steering Committee, the Senate and the Council. In addition, the Ad-hoc Committee with representatives from all levels of researchers (R1-R4) were presented with the overall status of CUT at Interim Phase with regards to C&C (strengths and weaknesses) and had the opportunity to express their views, which were considered in the Extensive Action Plan 2025-2028.

All information and new practices where published on CUT Webpage and Intranet, ensuring that all researchers adhered to new practices, and were incorporated in induction material and training.

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

There is Steering Committee (Rector's Council) overseeing the overall implementation of the Action Plan, providing strategic recommendations and monitoring success.

As mentioned above, the HRS4R WG Coordinator monitors progress and records activities taking place or obstacles faced, having the Action Plan with the actions, responsible units and timeframes set as a guide. The HRS4R WG and OTM-R WG hold regular meetings. Every 6 months, the HRS4R WG reports progress to the Steering Committee (Rector's Council). Changes deemed necessary for the smooth implementation of the project or changes required in actions originally set, are discussed and agreed with the VRAA and the Steering Committee (Rector's Council).

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?

Many of the principles in the C&C as well as the OTM-R toolkit are already incorporated in existing legislation/regulations/policies and practices. Developments based on the Action Plan will be incorporated into existing practices so that they are adhered by CUT Community.

In addition, it is of considerable importance the fact that many of the actions in the HRS4R derive from initiatives which were already planned by the University (by Administrative Services, CUT Committees, the Diversion and Inclusion Office, EUt+, LDN etc). Preliminary discussion with members of the University for future developmental projects/initiatives will bring the commitment of the relevant parties for the implementation of the HRS4R.

Most importantly, the HRS4R is a key priority in the strategic goals of CUT with regards to 'Academic Excellence in Research, Artistic and Design Work and Innovation'. Furthermore, it is a strategic goal of HR Services, Research Services, the Office of VRAA.

New actions in the Extended Action Plan 25-28 derive from priorities already set and agreed with various CUT units, ensuring their commitment for implementation. The implementation of actions and new developments will ensure the full alignment of organisational policies with HRS4R e.g. recruitment policies for researchers now comply with the OTR policy and OTR principles.

There is a [designated HRS4R point in CUT webpage](#), with all relevant information and new developments.

HRS4R is fully embraced by the Rector and VRAA and is the overarching HR policy for researchers at CUT.

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

Once the HR Excellence in Research award was granted to CUT, the VRAA communicated this achievement to CUT Community.

The Rectorate ensured that the HRS4R is clearly stated in the strategic goals of the University and disseminated to CUT Community.

The Secretary and Registrar of CUT ensured that the HRS4R is additionally incorporated in the strategic goals of the administrative services which were identified as responsible units in the Action Plan. At CUT, strategic goal setting and monitoring is a common practice (interim and annual progress review).

Furthermore, the HRS4R was included in the strategic goals of EUt[+] and some principles of the C&C and OTM-R were incorporated in the Equality Plan (2022-2024). Implementation of the HRS4R was therefore monitored via the accomplishment of the above-mentioned strategic goals. Results were published in progress reports issued (e.g. Annual CUT Activity Report, Annual Equality Progress report etc).

Evidence on the implementation of actions and new developments was collected in relation to the following:

- Revised policies/new policies published on webpage/ intranet
- Revised policies/new policies used in induction material and trainings
- Progress reports
- Training programs
- Internal communication/publications/website/intranet/reports of CUT
- Indicators identified

The HRS4R WG was responsible for the regular monitoring of the action implementation and reported on progress to the Steering Committee (Rector's Council).

How are you monitoring progress (timeline)?

The monitoring is linked to the targets and indicators detailed in the HRS4R Action Plan. The timeframe is monitored by the HRS4R WG and more specifically by the Coordinator of the WG (HR officer).

The HRS4R WG is in constant communication with responsible units and OTM-R WG to discuss progress and possible obstacles faced and makes amendments to timeframes as required.

The HRS4R WG prepares a progress report on a regular basis to the Steering Committee on the implementation of the actions with reference to the agreed timeframe.

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

The indicators defined both in the Action Plan and the OTM-R Checklist will be communicated to responsible units and OTM-R WG.

The HRS4R WG will use indicators defined to record information and monitor the implementation and effectiveness of actions. The data will be used to report progress to the Steering Committee.

The statistics/information collected will be disseminated to Administrative Services, units and University Bodies for inclusion in the various Annual Reports and publications issued by CUT.

How do you expect to prepare for the external review?

The process followed in the implementation phase (interim assessment) and analysed above, will be repeated for the Renewal Phase (external review):

- The implementation of the extended actions and new actions included in the Extended Action Plan 2025-2028 will be closely monitored based on the timeframes and indicators defined. Any changes will be made, if necessary.

- The HRS4R WG will be in close contact with the responsible units for monitoring progress.

- Data will be collected on the actions implemented for the update of the status and indicators in the action plan.

- Evidence on new developments/ initiatives which add value to the University's strengths under the 4 Pillars will be recorded.

- Priorities set in the Strategic Plan 2023-2030 will be considered for the Extended Action Plan 2028-2030 and meetings will be held with various University units to agree on new actions.

- The research community (R1-R4) will be involved in the process to gain an understanding of their evolving needs and point of view.

Specifically, for the external review (site visit), the HRS4R WG will need to be very well prepared with regards to the progress made during the HR award journey by the University, from the Initial to the External review phase.

This will be achieved via the following:

- We will have a big chart including all the actions for the period 2023-2030, with a clear indication and different colors used as to the status of each action.

- Evidence must be very well organized in a designated folder in CUT Intranet and presented to the EU in support of the implementation of the actions.

- The Steering Committee (Rector's Council), being the Senior Management of the Organisation, must be reminded of the general effort and investment made throughout the years and of the positive impact the HR Strategy has had on the University.

- Representatives of the research community and of key university units directly involved in the implementation of the HRS4R must be very well informed of the HR Journey and of the benefits derived from the HR Strategy for Researchers implemented. This will be achieved via informative meetings and trainings, in advance of the site visit.

Final Remarks

CUT will adhere to and continue to develop established good practices in line with the principles of the C&C and OTM-R, as part of its overall University Strategy in support of researchers at the University.

We intend to continue the work on the activities identified as key to CUT in close collaboration with our researchers in the long run. It was not possible to incorporate all actions/possible measures in the Extended Action Plan, given the timeframe of three years. The Gap analysis, OTM-R Checklist and corresponding Action Plan are dynamic strategic documents that must be constantly monitored and continuously updated to reflect the dynamic changing environment of CUT as well as the changing needs of its researchers.