

HRS4R – Human Resources Strategy for Researchers

Action Plan 2019-2021



Generalitat de Catalunya
Government of Catalonia

IRTA^R

Institute
of Agrifood Research
and Technology



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

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Introduction

IRTA is a research institute owned by the Government of Catalonia ascribed to the Ministry of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda. It is regulated by Law 04/2009, passed by the Catalan Parliament on 15 April 2009, and it is ruled by private regulations. It takes part of the CERCA centres system of Catalonia.

IRTA's mission is to contribute to modernising, improving, boosting competitiveness, and fostering sustainable development in the sectors of agriculture, food, agroforestry, aquaculture, and fishing, as well as in all areas of activity directly or indirectly related to the supply of healthy, high-quality foodstuffs to end-consumers, while also contributing to food safety and safe processing of foodstuffs and in general enhancing the health and well-being of the population.

Its general objectives are to **promote research and technological development in agri-food**, to facilitate the **transfer of scientific advances** and to evaluate its own technological advances whilst seeking the utmost coordination and **collaboration between the public and private sectors**.

Since it was founded, IRTA has sought to establish long-lasting collaboration agreements with other public bodies that operate in Catalonia in the areas of technological research and development. This approach has led to the creation of a consortium network of centres (involving IRTA, universities, CSIC, public-sector bodies, etc.), which is, in effect, an R&D cooperative system.

Since 2015, IRTA holds the **Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) award** provided the European Commission. The award identifies the institutions and organizations as providers and supporters of a stimulating and favourable working environment. The award holders are committed in developing an HR Strategy for Researchers, designed to bring the practices and procedures in line with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter and Code).

Two Action Plans have been defined and conducted since 2015. The first one comprised the period of 2015-2018 and it was based on establishing the bases and framework of the excellence of HR for Researchers. Actions such as the development of the Ethics Code and the Gender Balance Plan, the update of the Procedure for Recruitment and a specific Training Program for researchers were conducted. The second action plan comprising the period of 2019-2021 is currently ongoing and it mainly focuses on the Career Development of researchers R3-R4 and R1. This Career Development includes a specific plan to establish their aspirations and motivations at IRTA, a specific Training Plan for Researchers, an Annual PhD Seminar, FAQs documents for PhD candidates, updates in the PG-77 for Recruitment and the definition of the PhD position at IRTA in the Collective Agreement.

These two Action Plans enable the institution to fulfill the HR Vision and HR Strategic Objectives in alignment with the European Charter and Code principles. The description of the Plans can be found at: <https://www.irta.cat/en/work-at-irta/hrs4r/>

The design of the Action Plan

The HRS4R Working Group (WG) at IRTA is composed by HR representatives including the HR Director, the Scientific Director, and representatives of researchers from R1 to R4. The definition of the Actions to be executed has been carried out in a dynamic way in which not only representatives of the researchers and HR identify a need (gap or improvement) within IRTA, but also the Scientific Coordination Team (composed also by researchers) contributed to the definition of the actions via the Scientific Director who is also part of the WG. The overall identified actions have been then presented to several Committees within IRTA (e.g., Scientific committee, Executive committee), including the CEO, for their approval. In addition, actions have also been identified and proposed by the Board of Directors and then presented to the WG for their execution and monitoring. The main coordinators of the actions are the HRS4R Management Team (HR representatives) and the Scientific Direction together with the Scientific Coordination Team (Figure 1). The HRS4R WG meets at least twice a year and the HR Management Team and the Scientific Coordination team, weekly.

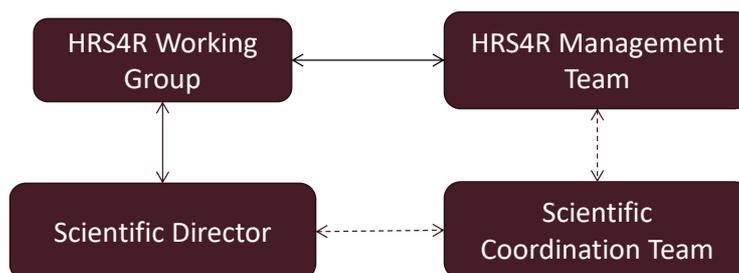


Figure 1. Scheme of the Action Plan coordination flow within IRTA

The design and development of the Action Plan considers the following aspects:

- HRS4R Charter & Code
- OTM-R Checklist
- Strategy of the institution determined by the Board of Directors
- Surveys and meetings gathered from previous actions
- Needs identified by the researchers via their Head of Program
- Collective Agreement of IRTA
- IRTA's mission and vision

Action Plan 2019-2021

The aim of the Action Plan 2019-2021 is to ensure the progress to quality of IRTA within the HRS4R framework by boosting the career development aspects of researchers R3-R4 and R1 in order to enlarge their engagement and spirit of collaboration within and outside IRTA.

Actions

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COORDINATION	INDICATOR /TARGET	STATUS
Definition of the PhD position in the Collective Agreement 2021-2023 according to the Spanish Law of Science, Technology and Innovation (RD14/2011) *	Q1 2021	HR	Collective Agreement / Recognition of the profession	Completed
Addition of external committee members in the Selection Process (PG-77)	Q2 2019	HR	Updated PG-77 / Selection	Completed
Acquisition of enough candidates with suitable requirements in the selection process	Yearly	HR	5 candidates with suitable profile / Recruitment	On-going, yearly, in 2021 approx. 13 cand./offer

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COORDINATION	INDICATOR /TARGET	STATUS
Update of the communication system with the candidates during the Selection Process	Q4 2021	HR	Letters / Transparency, Recruitment	In development
Development of a General Procedure for Training Management	Q2 2019	HR	Document PG-31/ Access to research training and continuous development	Completed
Offer training in soft skills in each yearly Training Plan	Q1 2019	HR	Courses / Continuing Professional Development & Supervision and managerial duties	On-going, yearly
Offer training in ethical aspects in research in each yearly Training Plan	Q1 2020	HR	Course in Ethics, Technology and Engineering / Ethical principles & Professional responsibility	On-going, yearly
Training Plan specific for Researchers R1 to R4	Q1 yearly	HR	Courses & Conferences/ Continuing Professional Development & Good practice in research & Dissemination, exploitation of results	On-going, yearly
Satisfactory and adequate Training Plan	Q4 yearly	HR	Satisfaction score ≥ 4 out of 5 / Access to research training and continuous development	On-going, yearly
Homogenization of rights for all PhD candidates regardless of their funding source	Q2 2019	HR	Access to all training actions & record their activity / Career Development & Research environment & Access to research training and continuous development	Completed

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COORDINATION	INDICATOR /TARGET	STATUS
Direct communication to PhD candidates	Q2 2020	HR	Microsoft Teams team "Doctorands" / Access to career advice & Continuing Professional Development & Access to research training and continuous development	Completed
Updating the Satisfaction Survey for PhD candidates at the end of their thesis	Q3 2021	HR	Document update / Supervision	In development
Development of a FAQs for PhD candidates	Q2 2020	HR	Document / Contractual and legal obligations & Access to research training and continuous development	Completed
Organization of Annual PhD Seminar including an evaluation panel and best presentation award	Q4 yearly	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Seminar / Dissemination, exploitation of results & Continuing Professional Development	Completed 2019 & 2020 Pending 2021
Development of a Pilot Program for a Career Development Plan for R3-R4	Q2 2020	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Implementation to 1-2 Researchers per Program / Career Development & Relation with supervisors & Access to career advice & Supervision and managerial duties	On-going Researchers in the Pilot Program 2020 = 18 Program 2021 = 20
Development of a for a Career Development Plan for R1 including a Mentoring Program	Q3 2021	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Implementation for all IRTA PhD candidates & Creation of a pool of mentors / Career Development & Relation with supervisors & Access to career	In development

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	COORDINATION	INDICATOR /TARGET	STATUS
			advice & Supervision	
Standardized Promotion System for consolidated researchers including external committee members	Q1 2021 and yearly	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team + HR	Promotion of researchers / Career Development & Relation with supervisors & Access to career advice & Evaluation – appraisal system	Completed, n=24 researchers were promoted

*Modification: in the previous Action Plan it was aimed to establish of a full category for the PhD position.

Evaluation of the Action Plan

Even though all proposed actions are monitored for their execution and quality by each coordination team, several are closely assessed as they directly impact on the career development of researchers at IRTA. Table 1 presents the methods that are in place for the evaluation of the career development plans as well as for the training plan. Surveys and follow-up meetings contribute as evaluation and follow-up tools, and they are responded in an anonymous fashion to ensure freedom and quality to the satisfaction rate. The questions placed in the surveys are related to usefulness of the action, improvement in the communication with the supervisor(s), communication of the project, development of the action and suggestions. It is important to mention that these career development actions are monitored bidirectionally, researchers and supervisors are asked for their satisfaction and perspective to be able to detect biases and miscommunication.

Table 1. Overview of the actions and their quality assessment methods

ACTION	Quality assessment method	Participants
PhD Annual Seminar	Survey	Audience + Speakers
Career Development Plan for Researchers	Survey	Researchers
Career Development Plan for Researchers	Survey & Follow-up meetings	Heads of Programs
Training Plan	Initial survey with identified needs	Heads of Programs
Training Plan	Survey at the end of each training action	Participant researchers



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