

Self-assessment report HR Strategy for Researchers

In the summer of 2012, the government approved one of the biggest higher education reforms in Belgium: as of the next academic year (2013-2014), all academic programs of the colleges have to integrate in the universities. For Hasselt University, this means an increase of 20% in staff.

Because of this short term and in order to make a smooth transition, the challenge was enormous for all departments over the university, and in particular for the personnel department.

Previous priorities had to be rescheduled with some consequences for the follow-up of the planned actions in the HR strategy.

Below you can find an overview of the actions that were planned and their status:

1. Recruitment

1.1. Information

Action 1	The human resources department publishes basic information about the working conditions and career perspectives at Hasselt University on the vacancy website	Deadline: 1 st quarter 2012 Responsibility: HR Status: closed
There is a HR-page on the UHasselt website (www.uhasselt.be/jobs)		

Action 2	The most relevant regulations and documents for foreign researchers are listed and translated into English	Deadline: 2 nd quarter 2012 Responsibility: HR Status: closed
Documents are translated (for example info for PhD students and the organizational guidelines, contracts) and there are parts of the website translated in English (for example: http://www.uhasselt.be/PhD , http://www.uhasselt.be/Documents/UHasselt/onderzoek/doctoreren/DoctoraatsreglementDEFeng.pdf , http://www.uhasselt.be/doctoral-school-medicine , http://www.uhasselt.be/Doctoral-School-for-sciences-and-Technology). Further translation is ongoing.		

Action 3	The Human Resources department cooperates with other departments to develop a new welcoming structure, aligned to several target groups	New deadline: 4 th quarter 2013 Responsibility: HR Status: short term
New staff are invited to attend their first day for an introduction to the personnel department (around personnel matters). Both the presentation and the information brochure are thoroughly reviewed. The HR department has an intranet, packed with practical information for employees. The 'info session new style' in cooperation with other departments has to be set up in 2014 (in cooperation with the new safety and security manager who starts 1 October).		

1.2 The recruitment and selection process

Action 4	The computer department creates a suggestion tool for international vacancies	New deadline: 4 th quarter 2013 Responsibility: Research coordination office Status: short term
It appears that this action was planned to soon. Extra expertise is needed in for example working with job sites for academic positions. Hasselt University is also part of an inter-university workgroup focusing on international recruitment. Vacancies are posted using the website, Academic Positions and Euraxess. At this moment, the HR department is supporting departments with international vacancies.		

Action 5	The computer department creates an electronic applicants' file	Deadline: 4th quarter 2012 Responsibility: HR Status: closed
The online application tool has been launched on 1 November 2012.		

Action 6	The Human Resources Department actualizes the guide for recruitment of academic staff members and organizes a workshop for the members of selection committees.	New deadline: 2nd quarter 2014 Responsibility: HR Status: mid term
This action is postponed due to the integration: as soon as all 200 new employees are working for Hasselt University, the new selection committees will be composed and the workshop will be planned for new people in selection committees.		

Action 7	The Human Resources Department sets up competence profiles for researchers and creates suitable tests based upon an assessment center.	New deadline: 4th quarter 2014 Responsibility: HR Status: mid term
Hasselt University participated in a pilot project to identify learning and development needs for researchers in the search for an adequate tool. UHasselt is working on new job descriptions for administrative and management functions and some research functions are integrated in that scope. This will give useful information for the set-up of competence profiles. Further actions will be planned soon, in an integrated way with learning and development actions.		

1.3 Attention to mobility

Action 8	The Human Resources Department creates a new policy for the recognition of experience of researchers in order to determine their seniority and the Research Coordination Office elaborates facilities to stimulate mobility	Deadline: 2nd quarter 2012 Responsibility: HR/Research Coordination Office Status: closed
There is a new policy since September 2011. This allows the personnel department to recognize more scientific experience from outside academia. The Research Coordination Office (DOC) organizes an annual information session 'Knowledge on the move' that informs researchers on specific mobility options. Researchers are also informed about calls for mobility fellowships and funding of national, European and international funding agencies. There is a program to finance research mobility for senior researchers and the Doctoral School program finances the mobility costs of young researchers.		

2. Working conditions

2.1 Stability of working relationship

Action 9	The Human Resources Department will make the career policy for researchers topical.	New deadline: 4th quarter 2014 Responsibility: HR Status: mid term
Some minor changes have already been implemented. The new personnel of the colleges have different career paths and it is the objective to integrate some elements in the new career policy for researchers planned for 2014.		

2.2 Work-life balance

1. Administrative overload

Action 10	Creation of a workgroup for the decrease of administrative overload of tenured academic staff	Deadline: 2 nd quarter 2014 Responsibility: Board of the University Status: mid term
Following a collective agreement (CAO) at inter-university level, there will be an investigation of the workload. The outcome of this investigation will be the basic working document for this workgroup .		

2. Differentiated careers

Action 11	Cooperate in the elaboration of differentiated tenured academic staff careers	Deadline: 4th quarter 2014 Responsibility: Board of the University Status: mid term
Both by the staff of the colleges that integrate into the university and as a result of initiatives taken at national level, the foundation for developing the ability of a differentiated career (with an emphasis on teaching) is laid. There are several workgroups at Hasselt University, in which for example benchmarks are performed in order to develop new career paths.		

2.3 Gender issues

Action 12	The board of Hasselt University foresees in a postdoctoral mandatory in order to study the internal approach of the gender issue and to propose new initiatives.	Deadline: 1th quarter 2014 Responsibility: Board of the University Status: mid term
Due to the unforeseen resignation of a researcher, this action is on delay. A new post doc researcher is hired in the meantime. On the same time, there is a high level workgroup taking actions, such as the 1/3 gender guideline (this means that there is a maximum of 2/3 members of the same sex in each official commission of the University).		

2.4 Safety and Security

Action 13	The prevention advisor works out a standardized purchase procedure for dangerous products.	New deadline: 2nd quarter 2014 Responsibility: Prevention advisor Status: mid term
Recently, a new purchase policy came into force. The prevention advisor investigates the purchase of a software program to guarantee a unified purchase procedure for dangerous products. The new safety and security manager who starts 1 October will also provide input to develop the procedure.		

Action 14	Elaboration of a security system of research results and back-up with sensitizing actions	New deadline: 2 nd quarter 2014 Responsibility: IT Department Status: mid term
The Board of the University approved at 11.10.2011 a vision text about security, aimed at the creation of an Information Security Management System. At the same time, a security consultant was appointed. The implementation of the Information Security Management System is still under further investigation.		

2.5 Career guidance and advice

Action 15	The Research Coordination Office establishes with the faculty of Sciences and the Faculty of Business Economics and the integration associated faculties two additional doctoral schools, with an optimized support to PhD students preparing their doctoral project, useful information about the labour market and adequate training to position themselves on that market	Deadline: 1st quarter 2014 Responsibility: Board of University Status: mid term
The doctoral school for Science & Technology (WET, IIW) has been established in February 2013. The doctoral school for Behavioral Science & Technology (BEW, REC, ARK) is planned early next year.		

Action 16	The Human Resources department works out a career development center which give the senior researchers lots of information about their career, the labour market and training in skills that make them stronger in the academic and non-academic world.	Deadline: 4th quarter 2014 Responsibility: HR Status: mid term
There are several training initiatives for researchers in collaboration with doctoral schools: Postdoc Symposium, a pilot career guidance project. In September 2013, an interuniversity symposium is planned, in which good practices to combine a family life and successful career will be presented. On ad hoc basis, post docs go to the personnel department for career advice. A new training program (leadership for academic people) is planned in 2014. These initiatives are all part of the career development center for senior researchers.		

2.6 Evaluation and performance review

Action 17	The Research Coordination Office and the university policy refine the evaluation criteria for the academic staff and make this known to stakeholders	New deadline: 4th quarter 2014 Responsibility: Board of the University, Research Coordination Office, 'Statutory advisory committee' Status: mid term
There is a thorough tenure track policy. A tenure track professor at Hasselt university gets an annual evaluation, based on a short self-evaluation report and an evaluation by the tenure track commission. DOC and PER are working out a comparable policy for the academic staff, ZAP-track. The further elaboration of that policy continues in 2014. One of the topics is taking more differentiated careers into account (see action 11)		

Action 18	The human resources department specifies a system of job performance interviews and hands the necessary tools.	Deadline: 2nd quarter 2012 Responsibility: HR Status: closed
Staff members who evaluate employees are trained. A document and guide is created.		

3. Training

Action 19	The human resources department works on the qualitative and the quantitative development of a training offer, in the framework of a general education policy, with attention to the specific needs of researchers.	New deadline: 2nd quarter 2014 Responsibility: HR Status: mid term
There is no general education policy yet, but several training initiatives have been taken and/or are planned. In doctoral schools, a large offer was developed (scientific communication, projectmanagement, timemanagement, effective presentation...). A follow up database has been purchased and has to be implemented in order to develop training paths for several target groups.		

4. Ethical and professional aspects

Action 20	Ethical code: The ethical code is completed and researchers will be sensitized to respect this code. This also includes the establishment of ethical commissions.	Deadline: 2nd quarter 2012 Responsibility: Research Coordination Office Status: closed
The ethical commissions of Hasselt University have been founded before 2010. In the first quarter of 2013, Hasselt University signed a cooperation agreement with the two regional hospitals for a joint ethical commission. The Commission Scientific Integrity was founded in the first quarter of 2013. Infosessions on Scientific Integrity are planned via the Doctoral Schools.		

Conclusion

The development of the HR strategy is a boost for new developments in HR for our researchers . Due to the integration project, some rescheduling was needed, but generally we are on track. New actions for the next 4 years will be planned in 2014.