



UNIVERSITÄT
ZU KÖLN

HRS4R

Human Resources Strategy for
Researchers

2024
REVISED
ACTION PLAN



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1 ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

Organisational Profile

One of the oldest and largest universities in Europe, the University of Cologne (UoC) is part of an international network of partners, member of the Coimbra group of European universities as well as of the European University Alliance EUniWell. Our mission is to create, preserve and impart knowledge, to offer outstanding education, to promote cutting-edge research and to drive innovation while focusing on the needs and challenges of today's societies. Aiming to be an outstanding and attractive place to study and to do research, the UoC continues to boast excellent working conditions alongside first-rate HR development services for all members.

2 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CURRENT PRACTICE

Ethical and professional aspects:

In order to improve transfer efforts at the UoC, the **Vice-Rectorate for Transfer** is responsible for formulating, implementing as well as further developing a university-wide transfer strategy (see new Action 25). One central part of the UoC's transfer efforts and its aim to create a culture of entrepreneurial thinking and action, is the GATEWAY Excellence Start-up Center. A milestone was reached in 2023 when the InnoDom Cologne building was opened, which serves as a central hub for start-ups at the UoC. The UoC revised its Patent and Exploitation Guideline, which was published in 2023.

The UoC's various efforts with respect to transfer have been successful in the area of knowledge transfer, as evidenced by its outstanding performance in the Times Higher Education (THE) ranking. The university has particularly excelled in research quality and industry engagement. The industry category measures a university's ability to contribute to economic development through knowledge transfer, which is assessed based on third-party funding from industry and the number of patent citations attributed to the university's research outcomes. In the latest THE World University Ranking 2025, the UoC ranks among the top eight percent globally.

Moreover, the UoC has improved its ranking in the 2024 German Startup Monitor, moving from 4th to 3rd place. It remains the most start-up-friendly non-technical university in Germany, with 3.6% of all founders in the country having obtained their highest academic degree there. This recognition highlights the university's significant role in the start-up scene, as reported in the comprehensive study conducted by the Start-up Association and PricewaterhouseCoopers, which surveyed around 1,800 founders.

The UoC considers good scientific practice a prerequisite for top-quality research and teaching. In 2021, the updated **Guidelines of the University of Cologne on Good Research Practice** were published, followed in 2024 by an update of the **Regulations on the Investigation**

of Scientific Misconduct. These form the basis for the work of the Committee on Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice. It is responsible for clarifying the circumstances of suspected cases of scientific misconduct as well as it further develops best practice standards. Responsible handling of research data is supported by the various activities of the UoC's Cologne Competence Centre for Research Data Management (see action 34).

In 2023, the UoC has been successfully recertified with the certificate on diversity **"Vielfalt gestalten"** (Shaping diversity) by the Stifterverband for a further three years. Impressed by the UoC's diversity actions, the Critical Peers identified the actions on critique of racism and anti-discrimination as flagship initiatives among the German universities. They recommended to improve visibility of the advisory structure and complaint management as well as to centralize the offers. Therefore, the UoC will open a central **Confidential Advisory Office against Discrimination and Abuse of Power** (see action 29).

In order to increase transparency, the action to implement a **compliance framework** was successfully achieved in 2023.

As part of the Rector's and Rectorate's change in October 2023, the University of Cologne established two new Vice Rectorates as a response to two major social challenges: the Vice-Rectorate for Transfer and the **Vice-Rectorate for Sustainability** (see above).

Challenges such as climate change, environmental pollution, resource depletion, food insecurity, biodiversity threats and social inequality are making a transition towards a more sustainable lifestyle inevitable. To meet these challenges, the UoC has established the Vice-Rectorate for Sustainability which is supported by the Sustainability Office. It is responsible for the integration of sustainable development in all areas of the UoC. A Sustainability Council was set up with the participation of all Faculties and status groups. The council shall advise and make recommendations on the development of the sustainability strategy and an implementation concept. The university-wide public is involved in the Vice-Rectorate's work through regular sustainability forums.

In the course of several court rulings, the directive for the organization and implementation of occupational, health, and environmental safety at the UoC was adopted in 2024. It includes all essential occupational safety regulations, including those for the induction of laboratory supervisors. A general notification of responsibilities is intended to replace the previous individual notifications.

Recruitment and selection:

The UoC continuously strives to further increase transparency in recruitment and selection. To ease implementation of the university-wide Guidelines on Permanent Employment Opportunities for Academic and Artistic Staff at the UoC, which were adopted in Q II 2021 and which is overseen by the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Equal Opportunities, we designed a checklist for the Faculties and central units which helps to document whether the recruitment processes of the permanent academic positions besides professorships adhere strictly to OTM-R principles.

Our new OTM-R policy, the '**Guidelines for the Personnel at the University of Cologne (OTM-R Guidelines)**', was adopted in Q IV 2024. Beyond its initial scope, our OTM-R policy defines overarching principles for the selection and recruitment of all employees and civil servants at the UoC, with the only exception of the recruitment of student assistants, and thereby supplements the existing regulations for the various personnel groups (see Action 21).

The UoC continues its effort to increase transparency of career prospects, not only for early-career researchers, but for all doctorate holders at the UoC. We therefore not only revise our concept on career paths following doctoral studies, but plan to prepare a consolidated concept for career paths at the UoC which brings together all our ideas on staff development and (academic) career paths at the UoC (see new Action 25). In line with our new EU funding strategy, this concept will also include attractive career options at the UoC for external EU grantees. The new consolidated concept simplifies and streamlines all concepts, providing a coherent framework for all staff. This addresses gaps not only with respect to transparency but is also inclusive and better aligned with the university's strategic goals. The new concept will therefore not only describe possibilities of personnel development but also of career progression.

In Q III 2023, the UoC adopted new, completely revised **Appointment Regulations**. These take account of current legal requirements and set new standards for more transparency and gender sensitivity in appointment procedures. Moreover, strategic professorship planning was introduced in 2020/21 as a long-term planning tool for recruitment processes at the professorial level and is currently being further developed.

The UoC has a well established Tenure Track system which is continuously being further developed (see Action 1): The implementation of the Tenure Track Programme of the German Federal Government and the Federal States (WISNA), which is coordinated by the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development in close collabo-

ration with several administrative units, was accompanied by a series of workshops as well as one of two evaluations of the UoC tenure track system. Moreover, the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development met with tenure track candidates to gain insights to needs, concerns and potential for improvement. Meetings with tenure track candidates are now scheduled on a regularly basis. In 2021, the revised Tenure Track Regulations (Regulations on Quality Assurance in Tenure Track Procedures and Other Evaluation Procedures for Temporary (Junior) Professorships at the University of Cologne) were adopted.

The revised Tenure Track Regulations now govern all evaluation procedures for fixed-term professorships at the UoC, including those of tenure track candidates, those of junior professors without tenure track as well as the tenure decisions of all other fixed-term professorships, and thus ensuring procedural transparency across the different kinds of procedures. The annex to the regulations contains extensive handouts for hands-on implementation of the procedures including timelines as well as templates, which were developed in close cooperation with the Faculties as well several administrative units and coordinated by the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development.

The revised Appointment Regulations take account of current legal requirements and set new standards for more transparency and gender sensitivity in appointment procedures. The precise definition and explanation of selection criteria is becoming much more important, as is the active recruitment of women. The work of the Appointment Committee is supported by special guidelines. In Q II 2024, the Guideline for calculating the 'academic age' in appointment procedures was revised, taking into account unavoidable periods of delay (e.g. care for children or relatives in need of care). It contributes to increasing gender sensitivity in appointment procedures. The transparency of the appointment process is increased by the Handout for dealing with questions of bias in professors appointment procedures, which serve as a guide for members of the appointment committee and external experts and improve the objectivity in appointment procedures.

A permanent working group 'AG Berufungsordnung' (Appointment Regulations) was set up, which, in addition to revising the rules, also addresses all other (legal, procedural, etc.) issues relating to the topics of appointment and tenure track.

One of the major challenges in recruiting staff is attracting international specialists. To meet this challenge, the UoC has appointed the first **Rector's Representative for International Affairs**. Although the number of international academics at the UoC has risen steadily in recent years (e.g. professors of non-German nationality from 10% in 2015 to 13% in 2022), we see potential for expansion here. The

Rector's Representative focuses on the dissemination of concepts for the recruitment, onboarding and retaining of international academic staff. She is supported by the Division International Affairs. In order to promote the further internationalization and global networking of the UoC, the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development, the Head of Division 7 Research Management and the Director of our New York Office have continued their successful annual participation at the annual conference of the German Academic International Network (GAIN) and the European Career Fair. Moreover, to increase our efforts in international recruitment, we initiated a new podcast series representing the UoC's international faculty (see new Action 32).

Working conditions:

The University of Cologne is constantly working to improve working conditions for all its employees. On the one hand, the UoC is committed to improving the legal framework at federal and state level, but on the other hand it also sets its own guidelines and standards.

The UoC continues its commitment as an active member in the state's Standing Commission for the Evaluation of the **Contract on Good Employment Conditions**. The evaluation report (published 2022) confirms, among other things, a noticeable improvement in the practice of fixed-term employment, the need for improvements in the employment of auxiliary staff and the necessity for further expansion of corporate health management. In the course of implementing the evaluation results, the UoC is involved in the working group for the further development of this Contract.

Furthermore, even the UoC **Guidelines on Good Employment Conditions for Early-Career Researchers** were evaluated in Q IV 2023. The overall conclusion is that there are numerous positive developments: increasing duration and scope of employment for doctoral students and postdocs, a decline in the employment of doctoral students as research assistants, and the expansion and professionalization of the UoC's offers for staff development (see below).

In order to create the greatest possible transparency about working conditions at the UoC for non-German-speaking employees and applicants, the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development has published English translations of the various guidelines and contracts in Q IV 2023.

Remuneration is perceived as a key aspect for improving working conditions. While basic salary of academics is regulated by Collective Agreements or Laws in Germany, performance-related additional payments are possible for all staff within the legal bounds. In order to address the gender pay gap for performance-related pay revealed

in 2019 (see Gender Report on NRW universities of the Women's and Gender Research Network NRW), the Senate approved a completely revised guideline for special performance payments in 2022 in order to close this gap (see Action 18).

We attach great importance to our employees' experiences and impressions of their working conditions. Since several years, the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development organizes regular talks with Early-Career Researchers. The so-called 'Early-Career Researchers Consilium' offers elected representatives of the groups of R1 to R2 researchers the possibility to exchange ideas about current developments at the university directly with the Vice-Rector and to discuss their specific needs and questions. The Vice-Rectorate is planning further, broader exchange formats as networking and exchange meetings, e.g. with the entire group of tenure track candidates or with the very diverse group of postdocs.

Creating good employment conditions requires professional support from the very beginning. For this reason, welcome and onboarding formats have been implemented for all employment groups (see below). An onboarding interview (OBI) is developed especially for newly appointed professors (see New Action 27). This group is characterized by extremely diverse onboarding needs due to their very different experiences, so that in an advisory interview the individual needs can first be clarified and further measures can be recommended.

The COVID-19 pandemic has permanently changed the world of work. One of the major challenges for the UoC as an employer is to respond appropriately to the changed needs of its employees. For example, many employees want to continue to work remotely regularly even after the pandemic. One step to address these changed needs was the successful implementation of the **Work Agreements for Remote Work** (see Action 10).

The topics of health management and well-being are becoming increasingly important as factors of further development of HR strategies. In order to be future-proof in this regard, in 2024 the UoC's corporate health management was merged with the student health management to a comprehensive and holistic university health management (**Gesunde Uni Köln**). A holistic approach to strategy development in the design of health-promoting working and study conditions brings together expertise and resources. This is supplemented by the UoC's central role as one of six founding members of the **European University for Well-Being** (EUni Well). EUniWell's mission is to enhance well-being in social, environmental, economic and cultural terms through research and education. We will integrate the mission of EUniWell into the UoC strategies. Participation in a European

University thus enables the further integration and deepening of a European dimension in the future HR strategy of the UoC.

In 2023, the UoC took part in the survey National Academics Panel Study (NACAPS), which has been taking place regularly since 2019, for the third time. The Germany-wide results of this longitudinal study on doctoral students and postgraduates were published in Q II 2024. In Q III 2024, the UoC-specific data will be analysed, presented to the university public and measures for improving employment and doctorate conditions of R1 will be derived.

The UoC has implemented additional measures to strengthen anti-discrimination support and combat power abuse within the institution. Since 2022, the UoC has offered racism-critical counselling services, which became a permanent fixture in 2024. To further address systemic discrimination, the university appointed a Rectorate's Representative for Anti-Racism in 2022, as well as Ombudsperson for Antisemitism in November 2025.

Training and development:

In general, Department 43 HR Development is constantly expanding its offers in the areas of training, onboarding and mentoring.

The **Albertus Magnus Center** (AMC) is established as the central information, training and advice center for all R1 to R3 researchers. Some major steps have been taken in recent years: registration of all doctoral students via 'Docfile', full implementation of an electronic graduate file (Q IV 2024, see Action 16) and the establishment of an ombudsperson for R1–R3. Moreover, to implement transparent, similar and quality assured conditions for all doctoral students, the AMC Steering Committee, comprising members of each Faculty, agreed on the **Cologne Model of Structured Doctoral Studies**, a framework for doctoral regulations developed by the AMC. Furthermore, the conclusion of a **supervision agreement** between the doctoral candidate and the supervisor is included in almost all doctoral regulations. The UoC has thus implemented a key requirement of the declaration of commitment by North Rhine-Westphalian universities on dealing with abuse of power, which it signed up to in 2023. The UoC is continuing to develop the AMC (see Action 22). In addition, in close cooperation with the Junior Faculty Club (JFC), a programme is developed that is explicitly dedicated to the needs of tenured professors. The focus is on the preparation of and support through the various phases of the tenure evaluation, as well as quickly settling into the new leadership role.

As an equivalent to the AMC for established and leading researchers (R3–R4), the **Cologne Leadership Academy** (CLA) was implemented of Department 43 HR Development. It is an exclusive digital point of contact for HR development offers, aimed particularly at all managers (see Action 17). In addition, the leadership guidelines at the UoC were developed and implemented in a participatory process in 2023.

Supporting researchers in tenure track phases was one of the goals of the **Evaluation of the Tenure Track System** at the UoC, which was carried out in autumn 2023. The evaluation focused on the quality of the evaluation procedures, which were assessed by four external experts. The evaluation was very positive: the external experts praised the processes and support structures in place and made recommendations for further development, which are currently being assessed.

Acquiring third-party funded research projects is an essential part of any academic career. The **Division Research Management** continues and is constantly expanding its support to UoC researchers in all administrative matters relating to their third-party funded projects. The newly implemented database on internal research funding offers further support for our researchers to find a suitable third-party funding.

To face the competition between the various employment sectors for academically highly qualified persons, the UoC is a founding member of PERMODEA, a regional cooperation platform founded in 2023 by the TH Köln/University for Applied Sciences Cologne together with other stakeholders. The aims are to establish new, permeable career paths between the various employment sectors, especially between universities and the private sector, to improve qualification opportunities and to establish networks between the different sectors.

In view of the existing shortage of skilled workers in the field of science and science management, retaining qualified staff is one of the most important goals. An important component is the targeted development and further qualification of employees. In order to give this aspect more weight, staff development was (again) included in the title of the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development (see below). In addition, the two separate departments of Human Resources Development for researchers and for non-academic staff were merged in Q IV 2023 in order to pool resources and exploit synergy effects. This restructuring resulted in a modern HR Development that can meet the challenges of the future. A restructuring is also currently taking place in the area of (the numerous) concept papers for academic staff development. The aim is to produce one consolidated concept paper that describes the goals and perspectives of career paths and development for all academic staff at the UoC.

Changed priorities for the short and medium term

The social challenge of the need for more sustainability is coming to the fore and is increasingly influencing the university's entire actions. The founding of the Vice-Rectorate for Sustainability takes this new prioritization into account (see above). In Q IV 2024 the university-wide sustainability strategy was adopted. In addition, the success and social acceptance of a university are increasingly linked to its activities in the area of transfer. Therefore, the transfer area was expanded and professionalized. The UoC transfer strategy (see Action 31) introduced by the Vice-Rectorate for Transfer will also shape future actions in the area of HR strategy.

As part of its corporate health management, the UoC took part in the employee survey 'Bielefeld Questionnaire on Working Conditions and Health at Universities' in 2023. It is a follow-up survey (initial survey in 2016) and is an employee survey instrument that is specially designed for the German university context with focus on (mental) health. Across the university and regardless of status group, general workload in particular was identified as a critical result requiring action. On the other hand, the management and cooperation culture as well as the widespread use of hybrid forms of work were rated positively. In the initial survey in 2016, 'leadership and cooperation' were still identified as stress factors. We are pleased that the resulting measures, such as the development and implementation of leadership guidelines for all managers and the widespread introduction of annual Personnel Development Dialogues, not only for administrative but also for academic staff, have successfully addressed these factors (see Action 4, 5 and even 6 and 17).

The fact that more and more cases of abuse of power in higher education are coming to light across Germany means that the fight against abuse of power must also be prioritized at the UoC. The UoC has endorsed the declaration of commitment by North Rhine-Westphalian universities on dealing with abuse of power in 2023 and is setting up a Confidential Advisory Office against Discrimination and Abuse of Power (see Action 29). In addition, the current global political situation, against the background of the Middle East conflict, makes it necessary to increasingly focus on anti-Semitism (see Action 9).

Changed circumstances with an impact on our HR strategy

In October 2023, there was a fundamental change in the management of the UoC. The UoC got a new Rector and in the course of this, all Vice-Rector positions, with the exception of the full-time Vice-Rectorate for Teaching and Studies, were also reassigned. This change was accompanied by a restructuring and the creation of two entirely new Vice-Rectorates, so that the UoC now has six Vice-Rectorates

In particular, the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Equal Opportunities was (again) split into two Vice-Rectorates in order to cope with the large number of tasks. Above all, new challenges such as dealing with the growing shortage of skilled workers, the growing dissatisfaction with the working conditions of early- and mid-career researchers (esp. fixed-term contracts; the debate #IchBinHanna; reform of Academic Fixed-Term Contract Act), but also dealing with abuse of power require these tasks to be divided among different experts. The UoC's HR strategy is managed by the newly established **Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development**, which works closely with the **Vice-Rectorate for Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities** in this area, as there are many thematic overlaps. In addition, the Vice-Rectorates for Transfer and Sustainability were newly established to ensure that the university deals with these current issues appropriately.

In order to meet the demands of increasing digitalization and to be prepared for the future in this area, the UoC has established a Chief Information Officer (CIO) in 2019. The CIO supports the strategies for the IT organization and the establishment of an IT centre (ITCC). The increasing digitalization of jobs in science, but also in administration, as well as the comprehensive switch to digital administrative processes, presents an organization of our size with several challenges. The CIO can help to address these challenges in a comprehensive and forward-looking manner. The ITCC is founded in 2024 and combines the previously separate IT services for science (Regional Computing Centre RRZK) and for university administration (Staff Unit Information Technology). This bundles expertise, advances holistic solutions and simplifies the exchange of employees in all areas of the university.

In addition, a Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) has been established to counter the increasing threat of cyber attacks. The aim is to identify vulnerabilities within the university network as early as possible and to reduce security risks when operating networks and systems, thereby strengthening data security at the UoC. The CISO is also responsible for setting up and maintaining an information security management system (ISMS) in accordance with the requirements of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. She draws up the associated guidelines and security concepts for the central IT services.

Dealing with an increasingly complex media landscape also requires further professionalization in this area. The UoC has recruited a Chief Communications Officer (CCO) in 2022 who leads Division Communications and Marketing. This does not only improve our external communication, especially when it comes to making scientific achievements and research results available to the public, but also when it comes to internal communication with all staff.

Upcoming strategic decisions influencing the action plan

In 2020, the Contract on Good Employment Conditions (“Vertrag über gute Beschäftigungsbedingungen für das Hochschulpersonal”) was evaluated. The agreement, which came into effect in January 2016, was reached between the Ministry of Innovation, Science, and Research, the state personnel council conferences and the leadership of higher education institutions in North Rhine–Westphalia, including both universities and universities of applied sciences. Overall, the agreement aims to create fairer, more inclusive and supportive academic working conditions. Following the evaluation, the contract will now be further agreement. The University of Cologne is actively involved in this process as a representative of the State Rectors’ Conference of North Rhine–Westphalia. Moreover, the Higher Education Act of North Rhine–Westphalia (Higher Education Strengthening Act) is currently being revised. The Draft bill of the Higher Education Strengthening Act was published in October 2024. Among other things, amendments address digitalization and dealing with abuse of power.

The University Strategy Plan (HEP) was approved in 2023 and will be implemented by 2028. It forms the strategic framework for the development of the UoC and specifies our mission, vision and values by defining strategies in the fields of action and performance dimensions of the UoC. The HEP is interlinked with other strategic instruments like the target agreements with the Faculties which are currently being revised. The new agreements are scheduled to be finalized in Q VI 2024, valid for the period 2025–2027.

In the current application phase, the UoC will once again apply for the status of University of Excellence as part of the **Excellence Strategy of the German Federal Government and the Federal States** to strengthen top-level university research. With the approval of a total of six Cluster of Excellence outlines (four extensions, two new ones) for full application, the first hurdle has been overcome. If at least two clusters can be successfully acquired, the UoC obtains the admission to the application for the excellence status. The potential application for funding as a University of Excellence and associated university-wide strategy process will be used as the basis for the next Strategic Development Plan.

Among other things, this will serve as a catalyst for the further development of the UoC’s HR strategy, as innovative, excellent and reliable career paths in science, staff development, support for early career researchers as well as processes for recruiting and retaining are becoming increasingly important evaluation criteria. In addition, the topics of transfer to society and sustainability are also being promoted as part of this process.

3 ACTIONS

No.	Proposed Action	Responsible Unit	Timing (in quarters)	Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Status
GOAL I: MORE RELIABLE AND TRANSPARENT CAREER PATHS					
1	Extend tenure track as career path for R3 researchers » Establishment of tenure track in all faculties » Refinement of the tenure track procedure	Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development/ Faculties	Continuous Q II 2021 Q III 2021 Q IV 2021, postponed to Q IV 2024 Q IV 2026	Up to 20 % of all new professorial appointments with TT Evaluation of TT procedures via workshops Adoption of new Evaluation Regulations Tenure Track Tool in Use Second evaluation of the TT system	<i>Extended</i>
2	Policy on permanent positions (university level)	Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development	Q II 2021 Q I 2021 Q II 2021 Continuous Continuous Q II 2026	Adoption of a policy Pilot review process of personnel matters Implementation Further development and revision Indicator: reduced rate of temporary employment for positions financed through direct government funding Evaluation	<i>Completed</i> → <i>new action (25)</i>
3	Revision or adoption of policies on permanent positions (Faculty level)	Dean's offices of the six Faculties	Q III 2019	Revision or adoption of the policies	<i>Completed</i>
(25) New action	Staff development and (academic) career paths at UoC	Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development	Q IV 2025	Publication of the consolidated concept	<i>New</i>
(26) New action	Further development of the Albertus Magnus Center (AMC)	Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development	Q IV 2025	Revision of governance and clarification of rules of procedure	<i>New</i>

No.	Proposed Action	Responsible Unit	Timing (in quarters)	Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Status
GOAL II: BETTER SUPPORT FOR PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT					
4	Guidelines on responsibilities of academic staff in leadership positions	Dep. 43 and 42	Q I 2022 Continuous	Adoption of a policy Implementation	<i>Completed</i>
5	Regular personnel development reviews for academic staff	Dep. 43	Q IV 2019 Q I 2020 Q IV 2020 Q II 2021, postponed to Q II 2022 Q II 2026, Postponed to Q II 2027	Templates for personnel development reviews Testing in a pilot phase Evaluation of the pilot phase Implementation Evaluation	<i>Completed</i>
6	Trainings on leadership and management skills for academic staff	Dep. 43	continuous Q III 2019 Q I 2020 Q III 2021, Postponed to Q III 2023	Revision of course format to better suit the different groups of participants Introduction of obligatory participation for all newly appointed professors Adaptation of course format: remote leadership Evaluation of obligatory participation	<i>Completed</i> → <i>new</i> <i>action (27)</i>
7	Ombudsperson for researchers in the postdoc-phase	Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development	Q IV 2019	Installation of an ombudsperson and communication to academic staff	<i>Completed</i>
17	UoC Leadership Academy new title: Cologne Leadership Academy (CLA)	Dep. 43	Q II 2021 Q IV 2021, postponed to Q IV 2024 – Q I 2025 Continuous	Development of a new marketing strategy for leadership offers Launch of website in German and English Increased participation rate	<i>In progress</i>
(27) New action	Development and implementation of onboarding interview (OBI) for new professors	Dep. 43	Q IV 2024	The results of the first year following the introduction of the OM will be presented to the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development; adaptation if necessary	<i>New</i>

No.	Proposed Action	Responsible Unit	Timing (in quarters)	Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Status
GOAL III: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES					
8	Continue to enhance gender balance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Agreements with the Faculties Gender & Diversity Action Plans for the overall university and for the Faculties and administration 	Vice-Rectorate for Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities; Gender Equality Officer; Department for Equal Opportunities	Continuous Q I 2025 Q IV 2026	Increased no. of female postdocs and professors according to the "cascade model" Adoption of the target agreements with gender-related targets as part of the new agreement between the Rectorate and the Faculties Implementation of regular and compulsory unconscious bias trainings for deans and members of appointment committees	<i>In progress</i>
9	Specific actions resulting from the diversity audit „Vielfalt gestalten“: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action Plan for the Inclusion of Handicapped Persons Non-discrimination Guidelines BIPoC representatives in all Faculties Unconscious bias trainings 	Department for Equal Opportunities	Q I 2019 Q I 2020 Q I 2020 Q II 2022 Continuous Q I 2025 Q III 2025	Reform of existing guidelines Adoption of an action plan and Beginning of the implementation phase BIPoC representatives in all Faculties Unconscious bias trainings Adoption of the new Action Plan for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities (2025-2029) Establishment of structures and point of contacts against anti-Semitism	<i>Extended</i>
10	Development of a Work Agreement on Teleworking for all employees	Div. 4	Q I 2020 Q II 2020 Q IV 2023, postponed to Q II 2024	Adoption of the Work Agreement Implementation Evaluation	<i>Completed</i>
18	Gender Pay Gap	Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Equal Opportunities	Q III 2021 Q IV 2021 Annually Q II 2027 Q IV 2027	Ombudsperson Measures to increase transparency and fairness in negotiations Annual report Establishment of a system to reduce the gender pay gap in appointment and retention negotiations Extension of data-monitoring including other employee groups in addition to R4	<i>In progress</i>

19	Establishment of systematic and transparent performance-related payments	Division 4, Staff Unit 03	Q II 2021 Q I 2023, earlier as planned Q III 2022 Q III 2025	Adoption of the Guideline for Special Payments (R1 to R3) Revision of the Guideline (R4) Implementation of the revised UoC Guideline for Performance Remuneration for R4	<i>In progress</i>
(28) New action	Diversity-related data monitoring for employees and students	Department for Equal Opportunities	Q IV 2025 Q I 2026	Diversity survey Diversity report	<i>New</i>
(29) New action	Confidential Advisory Office against Discrimination and Power Abuse	Vice-Rectorate for Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities; Department for Equal Opportunities	Q I 2025 Q IV 2027	Creation of the Confidential Advisory Office Evaluation	<i>New</i>
(30) New action	Strategy for Educational Equity at the UoC	Department for Equal Opportunities	QIV 2026	Adoption of the Action Plan to increase Educational Equity	<i>New</i>

No.	Proposed Action	Responsible Unit	Timing (in quarters)	Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Status
GOAL IV: BETTER DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS					
11	Innovation and Start-up Centre and extension of the GATEWAY incubator	GATEWAY ESC	Q IV 2020 Q I 2021 Q IV 2021 Q IV 2021	GATEWAY ESC as a central operating unit Adoption and implementation of Compliance Regulations for Start-ups Appointment of eight professorships in the context of digitization and entrepreneurship Establishment of a sponsoring association	<i>Completed</i>
12	Review of the Patent and Exploitation Strategy	Dep. 75	Q I 2022 Q III 2022 postponed to Q IV 2023	Formulation of a third mission strategy Revision of the policy and implementation	<i>Completed → new action (31)</i>
13	Establish a pool of science communicators	Dep. 81	Q III 2019	Train science communicators across all faculties and establish a network structure	<i>Completed</i>
20	Raising awareness and enhancing expertise for Research Data Management (RDM) and Open Science. See new actions 33 & 34.	C ³ RDM	continuous Q I 2022 Q III 2022 Q II 2023	RDM training and consultation Implementation of a reference database for UoC research data Expansion of the RDM expert network on campus through event series (experience reports, coffee lectures) Renewed survey of RDM demands of UoC researchers	<i>Extended → new actions (33) & (34)</i>
(31) New action	Formulation and adoption of a university-wide transfer strategy	Vice-Rectorate for Transfer	Q IV 2024	Adoption of a university-wide transfer strategy	<i>New</i>

No.	Proposed Action	Responsible Unit	Timing (in quarters)	Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Status
GOAL V: PROCEDURAL INNOVATIONS IN VIEW OF THE OTM-R PRINCIPLES					
14	Job advertisements on the EURAXESS website for research positions	Dep. 41	Q III 2018	Increased interest from applicants from abroad	<i>Completed</i>
15	E-recruitment tool for all academic positions	Dep. 41	Q III 2019 Q IV 2019	Pilot phase of e-recruiting tool Implementation	<i>Completed</i>
16	Officially acknowledge the status of all doctoral students and introduction of the electronic graduate file	Dep. 41 / AMC	Q III 2020 Q III 2022 Q IV 2022, postponed to Q IV 2024 Q IV 2023, postponed to Q IV 2025	Registration of all doctoral students in "DocFile" Pilot project with two faculties: Analysis of administrative processes, definition of requirements for the software provider Implementation of the electronic graduate file Evaluation of the pilot project	<i>In progress</i>
21	OTM-R Policy	Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Equal Opportunities	Q II 2023, postponed to Q IV 2024	Adoption of framework OTM-R policy	<i>Completed</i>
(32) New action	Increasing activities in international recruitment	Div. 4	Q III 2025	English podcast episodes are available	<i>New</i>

GOAL VI: INCREASING TRANSPARENCY AND COMMITMENT

22	Framework directive on compliance	Div. 1	Q III 2021, postponed to Q IV 2022 Q IV 2021, postponed to 2023	Adoption Directive Web portal	<i>Completed</i>
23	Evaluation: Good Employment Conditions for Early-Stage Researchers	Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Equal Opportunities	Q IV 2021, postponed to Q II 2024	Evaluation of guidelines	<i>Completed</i>
24	Communication Concept for the UoC HR Strategy for Researchers	Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Equal Opportunities	Q IV 2021 Q I 2022	Revision of our communication concept Implementation	<i>Completed</i>

NEW GOAL VII: RAISING AWARENESS AND ENHANCING EXPERTISE FOR OPEN SCIENCE AND RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT

(33) New action	Raising awareness for Open Science	Div. 7	Q ^Q III 2024	Kick-off meeting with all participating institutions	<i>New</i>
(34) New action	Enhancing expertise for Research Data Management	C ³ RDM	Q IV 2024 Q IV 2024 Q I 2025 Q II 2025 Q IV 2025 Q I 2026 Q IV 2026	Annual Meeting of the C ³ RDM advisory board Launch DataStore.NRW (Research Data Storage) International Love Data Week: RDM & Data Literacy Workshops Update of the UoC Guidelines on the Handling of Research Data Annual Meeting of the C ³ RDM advisory board International Love Data Week: RDM & Data Literacy Workshops Annual Meeting of the C ³ RDM advisory board	<i>New</i>

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION PLAN

The following section explains the aims, procedure and timeline of the actions listed in the Revised Action Plan.

GOAL I: MORE RELIABLE AND TRANSPARENT CAREER PATHS

1) EXTEND TENURE TRACK AS CAREER PATH FOR R3 RESEARCHERS / STATUS: EXTENDED

By the WISNA deadline at the end of May 2021, 26 of 27 approved WISNA professorships had been appointed, 16 of whom are women. One professorship could not be filled in time, due to a lack of time for negotiations after the first two nominees have declined the appointment offer. Eight of the WISNA professors have since received appointment offers by other universities, which four of them accepted. The other four received early tenure.

To further establish Tenure Track as an alternative career path, the UoC has set itself a target quota for TT professorships: By the end of the WISNA programme, at least 20–25% of all newly appointed W1 and W2 professors should be on a tenure track. This quota has been already met in the last years (2022: 19%, 2023: 25%).

The revised Tenure Track Regulations (Regulations on Quality Assurance in Tenure Track Procedures and Other Evaluation Procedures for Temporary (Junior) Professorships at the University of Cologne) were adopted in Q III 2021. Moreover, the revised Appointment regulations were published in Q III 2023.

The Vice-Rectorate organized several workshops with various stakeholders across the university, aiming at further developing the tenure track system at the UoC; for instance, the Vice-Rector met with recent and former tenure track candidates to receive direct feedback on their situation at the UoC. Regular meetings of administrative representatives of both Faculties and the central administration were established in order to ensure efficient cooperation in all tenure track matters. The results of these workshops contributed to the continuous improvement of the tenure track system. Further workshops are planned.

In Q IV 2023, the first of two evaluations of the TT system at the UoC took place with a focus on the quality of the evaluation procedures. In Q IV 2023, a site visit by a group of four external experts took place, with the participation of numerous stakeholders of the UoC. Focusing on tenure track

procedures, the feedback of the four external experts was very positive and lays ground for further improvement of our tenure track system , e.g. by introducing a ‘fast track’ for excellent candidates with external offers. The second evaluation is scheduled for Q IV 2026.

The tenure track tool is currently being developed in cooperation with the central administration, the Faculties and the Regional Computing Centre of the UoC (RRZK). The pilot process has already started, but the final implementation has been delayed due to staff shortages and is now scheduled for Q IV 2024.

2) & 3) POLICY ON PERMANENT POSITIONS (UNIVERSITY LEVEL) / REVISION OR ADOPTION OF POLICIES ON PERMANENT POSITIONS (FACULTY LEVEL)

STATUS ACTION 2: COMPLETED; STATUS ACTION 3: COMPLETED

The implementation of the university-wide Guidelines on Permanent Employment Opportunities for Academic and Artistic Staff at the UoC, which were adopted in Q II 2021, has been monitored by the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Equal Opportunities. In a pilot review process, the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Equal Opportunities (now Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development) as well as the Vice-Rectorate for Teaching and Studies have been looking into all pending permanent personnel measures as well as the advertisements with respect to whether the processes within the Faculties were in line with the guidelines. Annual reports on the implementation have been presented to the Committee on HR Matters of Academic Staff and the Rectorate.

Following first experiences with the new policy, some Faculties asked for an accompanying checklist to support the implementation of the rules specified in the guideline. This checklist was prepared by the Vice-Rectorate in cooperation with the HR department. Since Q III 2023, the checklist has been used to document the recruitment processes for all permanent academic positions other than professorships, strictly following OTM-R principles (see also Action 21). Taking feedback from various stakeholders into account, the implementation of a revised checklist will complete the pilot review process in Q I 2025. In Q I 2024, the English translations of all documents concerning recruitment processes were published online.

In line with the planned amendments to the federal Academic Fixed-Term Contract Act, the Vice-Rectorate is planning to develop a revised concept for career paths at the UoC following doctoral studies (see New Action Staff development and (academic) career paths at the UoC).

GOAL II: BETTER SUPPORT FOR PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

4) GUIDELINES ON RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

STATUS: COMPLETED

In a mental risk assessment by the UoC's Occupational Health Management in 2016, the topics of 'leadership and cooperation' were identified as stress factors. As a countermeasure, the UoC has published leadership guidelines for all managers. These guidelines have been developed by the HR Development in close cooperation with various stakeholders such as the Vice-Chancellor, the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Equal Opportunities, members of the staff councils, representatives of staff members and supervisors both from the Faculties and the administration as well as further staff representatives. Given its relevance, the project and its status have been presented to all relevant university bodies, e.g. the Senate and the Rectorate. In Q I 2022, the policy on leadership guidelines has been adopted.

To enhance visibility, a comprehensive information and communication concept was put into place. In Q III 2022, a website was launched that is specially dedicated to the leadership guidelines (see https://pe.uni-koeln.de/leadership/tools/guidelines/index_eng.html). For each guiding principle, a video clip shows examples of current practices and experiences from everyday working life of UoC staff. To ensure implementation, the guidelines have been incorporated into HR training courses, seminars and leadership tools starting in Q III 2023. Starting in 2023, the guidelines will be evaluated through a corresponding item in the employee survey. The employee survey is usually conducted every four years. Results of the latest survey show that respondents had very positive perceptions of their supervisors. Compared to the mental risk assessment 2016, these perceptions improved.

5) REGULAR PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

STATUS: COMPLETED

In Q I 2021, the Rectorate decided to implement mandatory personnel development reviews for all staff in all six Faculties, the so-called 'Personnel Development Dialogues' (PDD). The decision was based on the results of an extensive practice-orientated pilot process with participation of representatives of various organizational units and status groups, e.g. professors and academic staff (R1-R4) from all Faculties as well as Staff Council representatives.

For this purpose, the existing Work Agreement on personnel development reviews for staff in the Central Administration has been extended to incorporate all technical and administrative staff. The existing templates

for administrative personnel has been adapted to the specific needs of academic staff.

In order to keep all interested staff informed on the project status at all times, a website dedicated to monitoring its progress was set up (https://pe.uni-koeln.de/karriere/peg/index_eng.html). With a delay of one year due to effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of the PDD began in Q II 2022, accompanied by regular meetings and under the supervision of the Rector and the Chancellor.

To facilitate implementation, contact persons have been appointed in each Faculty as well as each of the central units to address Faculty- or unit-specific questions about the PDD, to provide information about new developments and to give feedback to HR Development. The HR Development keeps in close touch with these contact persons on a regular basis. To further increase visibility and knowledge about the PDD, the training concept was renewed: the trainings were extended in their frequency, shortened in their length, offered online and both in German and English. In Q III 2023, the implementation of PDD has been completed.

The Faculty of Medicine has also been performing annual reviews since 2021 within the framework of a pilot process. Following this successful pilot phase, the annual reviews have been successfully implemented. Due to the different conditions at the Faculty of Medicine, the annual reviews were developed in a separate process.

All of UoC's supervisors are obliged to offer their employees a PDD once a year – with the exception of student employees and doctoral candidates without a working contract. Student employees may be offered a PDD on a voluntary basis. PDDs are mandatory for employees in technology and administration, whereas academic members are free to accept or decline the offer of the PDD.

As the PDD was scheduled to be evaluated five years after the implementation, the new date has been set to Q II 2027. The evaluation may be included in the regular employee survey.

6) TRAININGS ON LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

STATUS: COMPLETED

Trainings on leadership and management skills for academic staff have been implemented and are evaluated and adapted on a regularly basis. Trainings are designed for different experience levels, starting with R1 up to offers for R4.

By the end of 2019, this action was extended to an obligatory programme for all newly appointed professors for certain trainings. In detail, participation was obligatory for (1) the welcome event for newly appointed professors, (2) a one-day-training 'Professional Leadership', (3) a short training on Personnel Development Dialogues and (4) individual teaching

guidance. The evaluation of this new programme had to be delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and had to be postponed until Q III 2023. This additional programme was evaluated for the period of 2020 to 2023. Results of the evaluation showed that only about half (55%) of the newly appointed professors participated in the obligatory events. The UoC has no means to sanction those who do not participate, and does not wish to do so. The reasons given for not participating boiled down to the fact that the programme did not fit the individual situation. Thus, a more individualized approach was adopted. This new approach aimed at a higher participation rate.

In Q III 2023, the Rectorate therefore decided to follow the initiative of the HR Development Department to discontinue the mandatory programme in favour of the individual onboarding interviews for all newly appointed professors. These onboarding interviews are led by consultants of the HR Development team and designed to last about an hour. They offer individual support to the newly appointed professors and answer their most urgent questions concerning the services of the administration and their own responsibilities (see new action – Development and implementation of onboarding interviews (OBI) for new professors).

7) OMBUDSPERSON FOR RESEARCHERS IN THE POSTDOC-PHASE

STATUS: COMPLETED (2021)

Since Q IV 2019, we have a central ombudsperson for early-career researchers who is appointed by the Rectorate. To counteract potential bias among ombudspersons for doctoral researchers within the UoC Faculties, R1 to R3 researchers should be free to contact either the ombudsperson of their own Faculty or that of another Faculty or the central ombudsperson for early-career researchers. Ombudspersons are listed on the AMC website.

17) UOC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

STATUS: IN PROGRESS

The UoC Leadership Academy was renamed into Cologne Leadership Academy (CLA). Due to staff shortage in the HR Development department as well as changing needs in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, the launch of the new website had to be postponed. In Q II 2023, the former two separate HR Development departments, one for the technical and administrative staff and one for the academic staff, were merged into one department. Following this, the concept of the CLA needed to be adapted. Since the merger, HR Development has reached out to all staff with leadership responsibilities from the start of their new leadership roles. In Q IV 2024 – Q I 2025, the

new website is planned to be launched in German and English. To increase visibility of the CLA, the launch of the website will be accompanied by an extensive marketing strategy including mailings, flyers etc.

The CLA now serves as the central virtual contact point for all academic and administrative staff with leadership responsibilities at the University of Cologne, and bundles all offers for staff with leadership responsibilities.

GOAL III: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

8) CONTINUE TO ENHANCE GENDER BALANCE

STATUS: IN PROGRESS

The UoC has a high proportion of women at almost all qualification levels, especially among students and at R1 level. The continuous increase in the proportion of female professors in the past ten years from 24% in 2012 to 31% (W1–W3) in 2022 is a success. However, the most recent figures also show that women are still underrepresented. This is particularly the case from the R3 level onwards and in management positions. As gender balance has not yet been achieved, the UoC considers this an ongoing task, closely linked to our OTM–R policy and its implementation (see section on OTM–R).

Based on the cascade model, each Faculty and the Rectorate agreed on performance targets for gender representation at all qualification levels. These were evaluated for the period of the years 2020–2022 and new targets were set by the Senate for the years 2023–2025. The UoC continues its monitoring via an annual Gender Data Report.

The Gender and Diversity Action Plans for the Faculties and administration as well as the Framework Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2020 to 2024 will be evaluated and updated for a further three years in spring 2025. The Gender Equality Concept, developed for the ‘Female Professorship–Programme’ of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, has generated 1.5 million euros over 5 years (2019–2024) to support various actions for women’s careers in academia at the UoC. A new Gender Equality Concept is being developed to participate in the ‘Female Professorship–Programme’ again. The main goals are the expansion of structures promoting gender equality and systematic integration of all genders in gender equality work, the reduction of the ‘drop-out’ rate of women after the R1 stage, an increase of the number of women in full professorial positions, the expansion of a family-supportive university and academic culture, the comprehensive protection against discrimination, the strengthening of Gender & Queer Studies at the UoC, and the expansion of an intersectional approach.

Further measures to improve the gender balance include a new Project Manager for Equal Opportunities Appointment Procedures, who has been

supporting the Recruitment Management Unit, the Central Gender Equality Officer and the appointment committees since Q III 2020. She supports the chairs of the appointment committees in individual cases with active recruitment, is involved in the revision of regulations and guidelines, creates awareness and further training opportunities for all those involved and monitors the procedural steps in the appointment procedures of all Faculties.

Additionally, the new appointment regulations came into force in August 2023. They include more transparency in the selection criteria, a mandatory active recruitment of female applicants for subjects with a female quota of less than 30% among university lecturers in the subject and instructions on taking unavoidable delays into account.

In addition to recruiting women, it is also important to retain outstanding female scientists. Reducing the gender pay gap plays a crucial role in this (see section on gender pay gap).

Another planned measure is the establishment of regular and compulsory unconscious bias trainings for Deans and members of appointment committees until Q IV 2026 to improve the selection processes in appointment procedures.

9) SPECIFIC ACTIONS RESULTING FROM THE DIVERSITY AUDIT „VIELFALT GESTALTEN“

STATUS: EXTENDED

The Audit 'Vielfalt gestalten' by the Stifterverband was awarded to the UoC in 2019, and the UoC has been recertified in 2023. The recertification process consisted of an on-site visit which took place in Q II 2023 and a comprehensive self-report, including new goals in the action fields of anti-racism, inclusion of people with disabilities, educational equity and anti-discrimination until 2026 as well as resources all of which were adopted by the Rectorate.

The Action Plan for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities includes 7 main goals and 65 actions to improve an inclusive university culture. It has been adopted by the Senate in 2020, interim reviewed in 2022 and will be evaluated and updated by the Senate by the end of 2024 for the next 5 years (2025–2029). The implementation of the Action Plan is coordinated by the Department for Equal Opportunities.

The Antidiscrimination Directive adopted by the Senate in 2019 and revised in 2022. The implementation is coordinated by the Department for Equal Opportunities together with the university-wide Anti-Discrimination Working Group.

Since 2019, the UoC has implemented both an external counselling service for students and an internal counselling service for employees who experience

racism as a permanent offer. Since 2022, the Rectorate has also appointed a Rectorate's Representative for Critique of Racism. Together with the students' BIPoC representatives and the teachers' and students' network 'Decolonizing Academia', a round table format and regular workshops on the critique of racism, the UoC has built up well-established structures of communication and action at a central level. The implementation of BIPoC representatives in all Faculties has not yet been achieved, but is part of the actions for the future.

The UoC has implemented a number of ways to raise awareness of unconscious bias and critical whiteness. In cooperation with the Human Resources Department, a digital e-learning tool on the basics of understanding unconscious bias is made available to all staff members. Specific trainings, both face-to-face and online, are offered to professors and staff. The Department for Equal Opportunities has published a video explaining 'unconscious bias' in the university context, available for everyone interested. Since 2023, teams out of the university (students as well as staff) can apply for funding to organize internal unconscious bias training through the 'Awareness Fund'.

The new Action Plan for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities will be adopted in Q IV 2024 for a period of 5 years (2025–2029). It will define new goals and targets in detail. Furthermore, the UoC will focus on more visibility and awareness for the inclusion of people with disabilities through training and teaching offers. The UoC will integrate the aim of accessibility into its strategy of digitalization of university processes.

The UoC also plans to establish structures and contact points against anti-Semitism and to offer training and awareness-raising activities on anti-racism and anti-Semitism by Q III 2025.

10) DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK AGREEMENT ON TELEWORKING FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

STATUS: COMPLETED

The Work Agreement was published on 30 June 2021. Due to regulations on working from home by the federal government during the pandemic, which were in place until May 2022, the agreement was put into effect from May 2022. Since then, many employees have reached agreements with their line managers. More than one third of the administrative and technical staff have a current agreement on mobile work with their line managers. Only in very few cases it has not been possible to reach an agreement straight away, but this has been successfully mediated by an arbitration body consisting of members from the Human Resources Department and the Staff Council.

In June 2023, the university conducted an employee survey concerning health and workplace issues. In this survey, employees expressed that they were very satisfied with the Work Agreement and that it helped them to achieve work-life balance and reduce stress. On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being

the best rating) the overall rating of the conditions for mobile work at the UoC was above 4.0 for all groups of staff (academic or non-academic).

The targets of the Revised Action Plan have been fully met. Due to federal laws concerning mobile work, the agreement came into force later than originally planned. As a result, the evaluation of the agreement, which is due after two years of experience with the work agreement, is currently underway. Preliminary results show that no adjustments are needed.

The Work Agreement was evaluated in June 2024. A steering committee consisting of 17 people (representatives of the Faculties, central institutions, administration, Gender Equality Officer, representative of people with special needs and staff councils) was formed and anonymously surveyed using EvaSys. The arbitration bodies also submitted reports on their experiences. Overall, all parties were satisfied with the work agreement. It is not necessary to amend the work agreement.

18) GENDER PAY GAP

STATUS: IN PROGRESS

The UoC has shown a steady commitment to closing the gender pay gap for performance-related pay at R4 level to the disadvantage of female full professors.

The Senate approved the Vice-Rector for Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities as well as the Central Gender Equality Officer as ombudspersons for R4 researchers who are disadvantaged by the gender pay gap.

In order to increase transparency and fairness in the negotiation of performance-related payments, the Senate approved a completely revised guideline for special performance-related payments in 2022. These include new and transparent processes to apply for and to decide about performance-related payments. Additionally, the Rectorate and the Deans carried out unconscious bias trainings in May 2022.

Since 2021, the Gender Pay Gap Working Group as well as the Rectorate and the Senate discuss and approve an annual report on the development of the gender pay gap at W2/W3 level. Furthermore, the UoC has been actively involved in defining an annual data report for all universities in North Rhine-Westphalia, which will provide a broader basis for comparison from 2025 onwards.

To continue its commitment to closing the gender pay gap, the UoC will take on new actions to increase transparency and fairness in negotiations. The UoC plans to implement pertinent processes for regular and transparent salary advancement. Processes should be in place for regular probationary advancement for special performance for individuals below the salary average and with few opportunities for retention negotiations.

Additionally, the UoC plans to set up a data monitoring of the gender pay gap in other staff groups.

19) ESTABLISHMENT OF SYSTEMATIC AND TRANSPARENT PERFORMANCE-RELATED PAYMENTS

STATUS: IN PROGRESS

In Q III 2022, the revised UoC Guideline for Performance Remuneration for R4 has been adopted by the Rectorate. Following the adoption of the revision, a further amendment to the guideline was sought in accordance with feedback from within the university. This additional amendment is intended to provide further clarity on the amount of performance-related payments. Postponed due to the election and constitution of the new Rectorate in Q III 2023, the revision is expected to be implemented in Q III 2025.

In addition, the UoC Guideline for Special Payments which addresses payments for public service employees and civil servants came into force in March 2021. These two new guidelines specify the rules for performance-related payments across the university, helping to avoid the inconsistencies and lack of transparency that have existed in the past.

GOAL IV: BETTER DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

11) INNOVATION AND START-UP CENTRE AND EXTENSION OF THE GATEWAY INCUBATOR

STATUS: COMPLETED

The Gateway ESC was established as a central operating unit of the UoC in 2020, including the transfer of 25 positions from the central administration to the Gateway ESC. A milestone was the opening of the InnoDom Cologne building in 2023, after the UoC received a private donation in the amount of 20 million euros for this purpose. InnoDom serves as a central hub for the UoC's start-ups, offering co-working spaces among other things. The overall aim of these efforts is to create a culture of entrepreneurial thinking and action. For this purpose, the appointment of eight professorships in the context of digitalization and entrepreneurship was planned. Due to delays caused by the COVID19-Pandemic, only six of these positions have been filled.

The Rectorate and Senate have adopted the 'Compliance Regulations for Start-ups at and from the University of Cologne'. These came into force in Q II 2021 and were intended for the 'Gateway ESC' central operating unit, which was founded by the Rectorate in 2020.

Finally, the Gateway ESC Sponsoring Association was launched in April 2023. It supports the activities of the ESC and start-ups as well as provides

a networking platform for sponsors and entrepreneurs.

In 2024, the focus is on the future structure of Gateway, which will be continued as a central operating unit from 2025 onwards. In the future, the Gateway will continue to support start-ups and spin-offs founded by researchers, graduates and current students from the UoC.

Moreover, a Gateway GmbH will be established in order to be eligible to apply for the current 'Startup Factories' call from the Federal Ministry of Economics.

12) REVIEW OF THE PATENT AND EXPLOITATION STRATEGY

STATUS: COMPLETED

The IP & Exploitation Guideline was approved by the Rectorate in 05/2023, presented to the Senate in 09/2023 and published internally in 12/2023. A delay of about one year compared to the original Action Plan was due to a university-wide participatory process to develop the Guideline, involving representatives of all Faculties and other internal stakeholders. The Guideline is now available in German and English via the website of the Transfer Department. A more comprehensive version is only available to UoC members, while an abridged version is available to the general public.

Due to its increasing importance, the second target of the action – the formulation of a third mission strategy – will be part of a new action that covers all activities related to the planned university-wide transfer strategy (see Action 'Formulation and adoption of a university-wide transfer strategy').

13) ESTABLISH A POOL OF SCIENCE COMMUNICATORS

STATUS: COMPLETED (2021)

The Head of Division 8 as well as the Head of Department 81: Press and Communications are the UoC press spokespersons and offer communication advice to researchers on a very regular basis. These take place both individually and in groups. The scope of these consultations depends largely on the wishes of the researchers and may cover topics such as dealing with the media in general, appropriate language and self-marketing. They may also address research and teaching topics of particular interest to the public, crisis communication, social media and hands-on website advice.

At their request, these researchers will be added to the UoC's pool of science communicators. They may subsequently be contacted in case of specific press enquiries, to which they will respond competently and comprehensibly for the sake of the UoC.

20) RAISING AWARENESS AND ENHANCING EXPERTISE FOR RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT (RDM) AND OPEN SCIENCE AT THE UOC

STATUS: EXTENDED → NEW GOAL: Raising awareness and enhancing expertise for Open Science and Research Data Management (RDM)

Ever since the UNESCO agreed upon a 'Recommendation on Open Science' in November 2021, the demand for support and investment in human resources, training, digital literacy and capacity building for Open Science has gained momentum. While 'Raising awareness and enhancing expertise for RDM and Open Science' was added as a new action to the HRS4R Revised Action Plan in 2021, the UoC now intends to change this ongoing support for cultural change in science from an action to a new goal, with a shift of focus on the broader range of Open Science practices.

The current dynamic developments in international and national policies as well as third-party funding requirements for Open Science and RDM are leading to rapidly increasing demand for consultation, project support, and training. Therefore, the UoC has initiated new strategic developments in the field of this action during the previous phase:

Since January 2022, the Vice-Rectorate for Research has been working on the development of an Open Science Strategy for the UoC. With broad participation from the Faculty and administrative representatives, the Open Science Principles were written based on the results of numerous meetings and discussions, approved by the Senate in May and published in November 2023. These Principles strongly recommend the implementation of Open Science Practices, especially in the areas where institutional support is already being offered (Open Access, FAIR Data, Open Research Software and Code, Open Educational Resources). Since October 2023, we have an Open Science Coordinator at the newly established Open Science Center Cologne.

During the current phase, the Cologne Competence Center for Research Data Management (C³RDM) has developed from a three-year project (2019–2021) with three centrally funded full-time positions to a central operating unit of the UoC (since 2022) with five permanent positions and additional support from the participating partner institutions (Research Management Division, University and City Library Cologne, Regional Computing Centre). C³RDM very successfully supported numerous third-party funding proposals in the development of RDM strategies, became a project partner in several large-scale research projects (e.g. CRC INF-Projects), and offered trainings, networking or information events, all of which

led to an expansion of the RDM expert network as well as an increased awareness of the importance of RDM. These two ongoing aims have been more than satisfactorily met and will continue to be pursued. The task of setting up a reference database for UoC research data moved from the responsibility of C³RDM to the Research Information System Project in order to prevent parallel system developments. A renewed survey of RDM needs of UoC researchers on campus turned out unnecessary, because C³RDM was involved in an intensive consultation process for the Cluster of Excellence proposals in the context of the Excellence Strategy of the German federal and state governments, during which such demands were identified.

Since February 2023, the UoC is participating in DKZ.2R, one of eleven data literacy centers in Germany funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), with three central institutions. The RRZK, the Center for Data and Simulation Science (CDS) and C³RDM are involved in various working groups and measures. C³RDM brings in extensive experience in advising and supporting researchers from all disciplines, in training formats and content, in FAIR Data Management and in long-term archiving of data.

As Open Science is a very broad field and the dynamics of RDM require regular adaptations of the objectives, we have substantially extended our efforts in these areas. Therefore, we introduce the new goal 'Raising awareness and enhancing expertise for Open Science and Research Data Management' with two separate actions (see Actions 'Raising awareness for Open Science' and 'Enhancing expertise for Research Data Management').

GOAL V: PROCEDURAL INNOVATIONS IN VIEW OF THE OTM-R PRINCIPLES

14) JOB ADVERTISEMENTS ON THE EURAXESS WEBSITE FOR RESEARCH POSITIONS

STATUS: COMPLETED (2021)

Since Q III 2018, the UoC publishes all academic positions on EURAXESS (R1 to R4). Since Q III 2019, all academic positions published in English have additionally been distributed on academicpositions.com. Web analytics show that within the last year, our own application portal has received traffic from 96 countries.

15) E-RECRUITMENT TOOL FOR ALL ACADEMIC POSITIONS

STATUS: COMPLETED

The electronic application portal has been officially rolled out Q IV 2019 and is steadily gaining users. Our new OTM-R-policy (see Action 21) requires using our electronic application portal recruitment process for all positions.

16) OFFICIALLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE STATUS OF ALL DOCTORAL STUDENTS

STATUS: IN PROGRESS

Since mid-2021, all features of Docfile are fully functional so that doctoral students can use it to manage their doctoral projects. As all doctoral students are being registered in Docfile since Q IV 2020, data monitoring improved substantially.

Docfile will be expanded to include an electronic graduate programme membership file, which will serve as digital workspace for doctoral students and coordinators of graduate institutions.

A working group of representatives of all participating Faculties as well as administrative staff was installed to analyse the UoC's structured graduate programmes and their current administrative processes and to define common processes and overarching requirements.

The implementation of the electronic graduate programme file proved to be a major challenge for the company due to the need of larger adjustments to the software. While the analysis of the administrative processes and the definition of the requirements for the software provider have been completed, the programming and implementation of the graduate file has been yet delayed and is expected to be completed in Q IV 2024. The evaluation of this project is now scheduled for Q IV 2025.

21) OTM-R POLICY

STATUS: COMPLETED

The implementation of the university-wide Guidelines on Permanent Employment Opportunities for Academic and Artistic Staff at the UoC was accompanied by a pilot process which helped identify strengths and weaknesses of the current recruitment processes. The pilot process then resulted in a checklist documenting the implementation of these guidelines for each step of the recruitment process (see Action 2). Therefore, the development of the OTM-R Policy had to be postponed in order to identify further needs in relation to the recruitment process.

In Q II 2023, the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development invited colleagues from HR development, recruitment, the office of the Central Gender Equality Officer, as well as the Strategy and Evaluations Department to form a working group. Bringing together various perspectives on recruitment and OTM-R-principles, this working group was ideal for developing such a policy. The working group prepared the 'Guidelines for the Personnel at the University of Cologne (OTM-R Guidelines)' which describes the overarching principles of the recruitment processes and adds to the existing regulations for the various staff groups at the University of Cologne. The OTM-R Guidelines apply to all recruitment processes, as well as to the methods and instruments used in the procedures for selecting and

recruiting all employees and civil servants at the University of Cologne, with the exception of the recruitment of student assistants. It includes recommendations for advertising, active recruitment, the selection process, the framework for appointments of professors as well as quality assurance, summarizes and complements the existing regulations of the University of Cologne for filling the various job categories: It recommends the use of digital application management systems, the active recruitment of promising candidates in recruitment procedures other than for professorships, and the composition of the selection committee in procedures for permanent academic positions.

The policy was broadly discussed within the UoC. In Q III to Q IV 2023, the first draft of the Guidelines were presented to a sounding board consisting of the Central Gender Equality Officer of the University of Cologne, colleagues from the Equal Opportunities Department, the Legal Department and the Human Resources Department. Following a review of the policy, the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor offered their feedback in Q I 2024, which was incorporated before presenting it to the Rectorate and the Deans of the Faculties in Q II 2024. The resulting draft was sent to the Committee on HR Matters of Academic Staff and the Deans' offices as well as to both the Staff Councils (Q II 2024). The OTM-R Guidelines were finalized in Q III 2024 und then submitted to the Rectorate for approval. In Q IV 2024, the OTM-R Guidelines were published online in English as well as in German as an official bulletin.

GOAL VI: INCREASING TRANSPARENCY AND COMMITMENT

22) FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE ON COMPLIANCE

STATUS: COMPLETED

The General Compliance Guidelines of the University of Cologne was adopted by the Rectorate in 2022 (2022-11-22), the launch of the (bilingual) web portal followed in 2023. The Guidelines bundles all existing compliance-relevant regulations and guidelines. The associated web portal provides access to all documents and enables the adaptation and expansion of compliance-relevant content for the UoC.

Initially, the project was scheduled for completion in 2021. Due to the impact of the pandemic, changes in the Rectorate as well as the large number of stakeholders involved across the UoC, the action was completed in 2023.

23) EVALUATION: GOOD EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS FOR EARLY-STAGE RESEARCHERS

STATUS: COMPLETED

An evaluation of the Guidelines on Good Employment Conditions for Early-Career Researchers was conducted by means of a quantitative comparative analysis of the employee data provided by the Personnel Statistics Department. The data shows that improvements were achieved in all target areas. The timing of the evaluation (originally planned for 2021) was adjusted due to the evaluation of the Contract for Good Employment Conditions by the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (Vertrag für gute Beschäftigungsbedingungen NRW) in 2022, in order to use synergies of both processes. The results were presented to the Committee on HR Matters of Academic Staff on 6 March 2024. The results of the evaluation show that the Guidelines do not address any further aspects than the State Contract. The results of the evaluation will be presented to the Rectorate in Q IV 2024 in order to decide whether the guidelines add further value to the State Contract or should be concluded.

24) COMMUNICATION CONCEPT FOR THE UOC HR STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

STATUS: COMPLETED

In Q III 2021, the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Equal Opportunities and experts from Division 8 Communications and Marketing have started to implement several measures to increase the visibility of the HR Strategy for Researchers, e.g. by improving the websites on the HR Strategy for Researchers.

As part of the new communication concept, the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Equal Opportunities initiated biannual meetings in Q I 2022 with the units responsible for the implementation of the HRS4R actions, as well as with designated representatives of the Faculties and the central operating units. Moreover, the Vice-Rector has presented the HRS4R and its specific actions to the various university bodies (see chapter 4 Implementation), in faculty meetings and in units of the central administration. In order to raise awareness for the HR Strategy for Researchers among early-career researchers, the Vice-Rector presents a status report in the biannual, confidential meetings with doctoral and post-doctoral representatives from each Faculty.

In order to highlight the scope of the UoC's HR Strategy for Researchers inside and outside the UoC, the former Vice-Rectorate designed a template which could be used to accompany presentations of HRS4R actions. Moreover, our templates for job advertisements feature the label 'HR Excellence in Research'.

NEW ACTIONS 2024

The following section explains the aims, procedure and timeline of the new actions listed in the Action Plan for 2024 to 2029.

25) STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND (ACADEMIC) CAREER PATHS AT UOC

The UoC aims to increase transparency and thus the possibility of individual career development based on individual talent and knowledge of career paths within and outside of the UoC as well as within and outside academia. While we have several guidelines in place, the coexistence of these guidelines and papers has been deemed inconvenient as it contradicts the UoC's aim to increase transparency. In order to clarify existing processes, structures and principles, and in line with the planned amendments of the Federal Act on Fixed-Term Employment Contracts in Academia, the Vice-Rectorate plans to develop a consolidated concept for career paths at the UoC. A first milestone is the compilation and review of all existing documents and regulations on recruitment, employment and staff development in Q IV 2024.

In Q II 2023, the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development installed a working group on career paths as well as staff development. The consolidated concept will be published in Q IV 2025.

26) FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALBERTUS MAGNUS CENTER

The Albertus Magnus Center (AMC) is the central information, training and advisory center for all prospective and registered doctoral candidates, postdocs, tenure track professors and junior professors at the University of Cologne. We will continue to develop the AMC to increase its visibility within and outside the UoC and to better meet the needs of early- to mid-career researchers (R1-R3).

The governance will undergo revision. Rules of procedure will be clarified and communicated by Q IV 2025 at the latest.

27) DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ONBOARDING INTERVIEW (OBI) FOR NEW PROFESSORS

Starting from Q I 2024, the HR department offers mandatory onboarding interviews to newly appointed professors. These onboarding interviews are conducted by consultants of HR and designed to last one hour. They aim at offering individual support, to ease integration and information and to establish a common understanding of leadership.

In Q IV 2024, the results of the first year after the introduction of the OBI will be presented to the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development.

opment. Depending on the results, a decision will be made on the continuation or further development of this measure. Preliminary results show that this measure is highly appreciated and beneficial for newly appointed professors.

28) DIVERSITY-RELATED DATA MONITORING FOR EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS

In order to learn more about diversity and discrimination at the UoC, we plan to establish a diversity-related data monitoring for staff and students. A survey will be conducted to collect diversity-related data and experiences of discrimination of students and employees, particularly with regard to diversity categories such as immigrant background, educational background, disability/chronic illness, care responsibilities. A report will be published on a regular basis. The survey is planned for 2025, with a first report is expected to be published in Q I 2026.

29) CONFIDENTIAL ADVISORY OFFICE AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND ABUSE OF POWER

In September 2023, the Rectorate decided to establish a single point of contact for the protection against discrimination and abuse of power to improve counselling and complaints processes, to connect and qualify existing counselling services, to improve visibility and to increase transparency. The Confidential Advisory Office against Discrimination and Power Abuse is planned to open in Q I 2025.

30) STRATEGY FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AT THE UOC

In order to support students from non-academic backgrounds (First Generation), the UoC intends to further develop its activities in the area of educational equity. To date, the UoC has developed unique projects to support first generation scholars, students and postgraduates, but lacks a common strategy or structure to extend these actions. We plan to set up a network of experts within the university to develop a common understanding and strategy for Educational Equity at the UoC. The approval of the Action Plan to increase Educational Equity by the Senate is scheduled for Q IV 2026.

31) FORMULATION AND ADOPTION OF A UNIVERSITY-WIDE TRANSFER STRATEGY

The UoC had already strengthened its third mission activities by appointing a Rectorate's Representative for Innovation and Research Infrastructure in Q I 2021. The newly established Vice-Rectorate for Transfer is currently focusing on the development of a 'Third Mission Strategy'. Thus, the devel-

opment of a university-wide transfer strategy is set as a new action. The Vice-Rector for Transfer took office in October 2023 and is responsible for formulating, implementing as well as further developing a university-wide transfer strategy. The goal is to reach a university-wide understanding of transfer, continue to improve transfer from and into the University of Cologne and to consolidate these activities. The adoption of a university-wide transfer strategy is scheduled for Q IV 2024.

32) INCREASING ACTIVITIES IN INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT

While the UoC already has various measures in place to attract international staff (e.g. job postings at EURAXESS), we will intensify our efforts to increase internationality. The personnel marketing will increase its communicational activities in English.

In order to directly address candidates, personnel marketing has launched a podcast in which the head of the department interviews interesting people from all areas of the university in an informal way. The interviewees let us know about their individual professional biographies and personal experiences of working at the university. In Q III 2025, episodes of the podcast 'And how about you?' will be available in English.

NEW GOAL VI: RAISING AWARENESS AND ENHANCING EXPERTISE FOR OPEN SCIENCE AND RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT

33) RAISING AWARENESS FOR OPEN SCIENCE

In order to centralize the activities and support structures for Open Science, to increase their visibility for research and teaching, and to strategically develop them further, the UoC founded the Open Science Center Cologne (OSCC) under the direction of the Vice-Rector for Research in 2023 and encouraged researchers to adhere to its new Open Science Principles.

The first target of the new OSCC will be a kick-off meeting with all participating institutions which will present their support services for Open Science subcategories.

In order to raise awareness and to ignite the discussion on campus, the OSCC will host a lecture series starting in winter semester 2024/25. This lecture series will shed a light on best practices and introduce experts and local Open Science enthusiasts from different disciplines and in different areas of Open Science practices (e.g. Open Access, FAIR Data, Open Educational Resources, etc.). Monitoring Open Science activities and measuring the effectiveness of awareness-raising activities at the UoC are also central tasks of the OSCC. An evaluation of the status quo is planned for 2025.

34) ENHANCING EXPERTISE IN RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT

C³RDM offers comprehensive support and advice on research data management (RDM) in all phases of research projects for early-career researchers as well as experienced professors.

Following the UoC Open Science Principles and new guidelines of the German Research Foundation (DFG), C³RDM will develop an updated version of the UoC Guidelines on the Handling of Research Data.

In order to provide researchers with sustainable and scalable IT services for research data management, C³RDM is actively involved in consortia in North Rhine-Westphalia in the context of DH.NRW. In the next phase, new RDM-related IT services will be implemented and communicated, including specific training offers for UoC researchers.

The cultural change towards Open Science (including FAIR RDM) is a long-term process that requires continuous institutional support. Therefore, the targets will also be pursued continuously: RDM training and consultation as well as expanding the network of RDM experts on campus through events (e.g. data stewardship meetings, NFDI networking events, Train-the-Trainer Workshops, coffee lectures).

OTM-R PRINCIPLES

In October 2024, the UoC published its OTM-R Guidelines as an Official Bulletin (AM 83/2024), which consolidates the principles of OTM-R principles into a comprehensive policy for both academic and non-academic staff recruitment, excluding student assistants (see also action 21). These OTM-R Guidelines apply to all recruitment procedures for academic and non-academic staff at the UoC. It supplements existing regulations for the various staff categories and provides overarching recruitment standards applicable across the university. These Guidelines build on the university's ongoing efforts to implement OTM-R practices across various recruitment processes and supplements existing regulations for different staff categories.

The UoC's aim is to attract the most qualified staff through procedures that follow OTM-R principles, with particular regard to diversity, equal opportunities, and mobility. These Guidelines have led to innovations that further align recruitment practices with the OTM-R principles and includes recommendations on job creation, job advertisement, proactive recruitment, the selection process, onboarding procedures, and quality assurance measures.

Key aspects of the OTM-R Guidelines include the use of digital recruitment systems, such as EURAXESS as well as the academic job portal, the external advertising requirements for permanent academic positions as well as improvements in selection procedures especially for permanent academic positions.

Additional commitments in the OTM-R Guidelines include promoting active recruitment practices in areas where the proportion of women is less than 30% for professorial positions and recommending active recruitment for any positions in fields where women make up less than 50% of the workforce.

Finally, to reduce the complexity of separate guidelines for staff categories, the new OTM-R guidelines consolidate recruitment standards into one unified policy, which aims to enhance transparency, inclusivity, and efficiency across all recruitment activities. Through this comprehensive approach, the UoC remains committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive academic community.

Additionally, the UoC has implemented tools like templates and e-recruitment systems to support the hiring process for both research staff and professorial positions. Regular training sessions organized by the UoC's HR Department further ensure that staff members are familiar with OTM-R principles, emphasizing merit-based and transparent recruitment methods. Moreover, unconscious bias trainings are offered to support equal opportunities in recruitment.

4 IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 General overview of the implementation process

Given the strategic value of the HR Strategy for Researchers for the UoC, we aim to embed all measures initially derived from the gap analysis, as well as our newly developed actions, into the structures and policies of the university. Building directly on existing strategies and measures, a third of our initial actions were already successfully completed in the first two years of the implementation phase. Two thirds of the actions of the revised action plan have been completed by now. The others are currently well underway and have reached important milestones. Based on our continuing efforts to further improve career development and working conditions for researchers, new actions proposed at this stage are currently prepared or already in progress. The project structure, as defined in the initial Action Plan, has proven to be well suited to ensuring a consistent and timely implementation of the HR Strategy for Researchers at the UoC and to fostering continuous development of this strategy.

The UoC Rectorate defined clear responsibilities for the implementation of each planned action, as well as for the supervision of the implementation and the monitoring of the overall process, with a view to optimal quality control as well as smooth and effective execution. The implementation process and our internal monitoring have been kept as lean as possible and have been integrated into existing university bodies and mechanisms, with very few additional tools. The experiences of the past years have further strengthened our conviction that this is the best way to achieve our main goal, while conserving our resources and avoiding an excessive number of new committees and advisory boards.

The Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development is responsible for all strategic developments pertinent to academic staff. Therefore, the supervision of the implementation of the Action Plan as the overarching UoC's HR Strategy for Researchers as well as its continuous further development are core areas of the Vice-Rector's responsibilities.

The HRS4R coordinator is responsible not only for the internal reviews, but also continuously monitors progress and documents any developments. The coordinator closely cooperates with members of the Vice-Rectorate, a staff member of Department 12 Strategy & Evaluations, the Head of Human Resources as well as others with different

areas of expertise relevant to HR matters. This group interacts in various HR-related matters in their daily work, ensuring effective communication and cooperation.

As the personal advisor to the Vice-Rector, the HRS4R coordinator is constantly up-to-date on any overall strategic developments, future plans of the UoC management as well as on the progress of individual actions, making her the natural person in charge where all the threads converge. She closely monitors measure-related progress, as the status of individual measures, as well as any changes or extensions are discussed by the responsible units with the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development in regular meetings, which the HRS4R coordinator always attends. Bimonthly joint meetings with, for instance, the head of Division 4 Human Resources and the heads of its individual departments play a crucial role in this respect. In addition, formal reviews on the progress of the measures are usually conducted every six months.

In regular consultations, the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development keeps the Rector, the Chancellor and the Permanent Deputy of the Chancellor informed about the overall process as well as measure-related developments. This allows for close monitoring by the university management and the possibility of adjustments, if necessary. In addition, in the case of highly strategic measures or those which require a decision by the Rectorate, individual measures are presented to the Rectorate in its regular meetings. Additionally, the Rectorate usually receives an overall HRS4R status report once a year.

The HRS4R steering group consists of members of the university management, i.e. the Rector, the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development and the Permanent Deputy of the Chancellor. The head of Division 4 Human Resources is an advisory member of the steering group. On behalf of the HRS4R working group, the HRS4R coordinator prepares brief reports on the process twice a year as a rule for the HRS4R steering group. In addition, the group members meet to discuss individual measures and how to proceed, if necessary, given the strategic relevance of individual actions.

The process of the HRS4R is monitored by the UoC's Committee on HR Matters of Academic Staff, a high-ranking university body chaired by the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development. It acts as an advisory board to the HRS4R and is made up of representatives of all status groups of the university: students, R1 to R4 researchers from all Faculties and technical and administrative staff. Furthermore, the heads of both Staff Councils advise the Committee, which meets at least four times a year to discuss all HR-related policies and matters. At least once a year, the committee receives a detailed HRS4R progress

report. Furthermore, individual measures may be presented to the Committee in more detail in order to allow for in-depth discussion of their progress. This reinforces the strong link between the HR Strategy for Researchers and the research community at the UoC. The overall monitoring function of this Committee ensures that the process meets the needs of UoC researchers as the main stakeholders.

4.2 Detailed description of the implementation process

Preparation of the internal review

Since the Action Plan represents the overarching UoC HR Strategy for Researchers, the supervision of its implementation, monitoring its progression as well as its further development are the primary responsibility of the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development.

As set out in the 2021 internal review, it has proven most effective to assign the routine task of monitoring progress to the UoC HRS4R coordinator. As the personal advisor to the Vice-Rector and head of the HRS4R working group, she is consistently informed on all strategic and measure-related developments regarding HR matters.

The HRS4R coordinator generally conducts additional internal surveys every six months, involving all responsible units, to formally monitor progress. Duly documented in the Office of the Vice-Rectorate, these responses have been included in all internal reports, such as the annual report to the Committee on HR Matters for Academic Staff.

This established internal monitoring process is the basis for the internal reviews and forms the basis for revising existing actions and developing new ones. The draft review was subjected to a broad discussion within the HRS4R stakeholders at the UoC, before being further discussed with the administrative units responsible for individual actions and relevant overall developments, i.e. with regard to the overall Strategy Plan of the University of Cologne. The Committee on HR Matters for Academic Staff discussed and approved the new actions. Finally, the HRS4R steering group released the review and the revised Action Plan on behalf of the Rectorate.

Thus, all structures as defined in the initial UoC Action Plan were duly involved in the process, including the research community as the main stakeholders.

Involvement of the research community in the implementation process

Instead of establishing an additional HRS4R advisory board, the existing high-ranking UoC Committee on HR Matters of Academic Staff will perform this function for the implementation and further development of the UoC HR Strategy for Researchers. It is well-suited to this function as it is made up of representatives of all status groups of the university, in particular researchers at all stages in their careers (R1 to R4). This committee, which normally meets four times per year, is an advisory body to the Senate, in particular with regard to good employment conditions at the university. Chaired by the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development, the Committee also serves as a platform for direct exchange between the research community and the university's management.

A comprehensive annual HRS4R report is presented to the Committee. In addition, it has proven useful to present individual measures to the Committee in detail, for instance the Guidelines on Responsibilities of Academic Staff in Leadership Positions (see Action 4). This gives Committee members a more detailed insight into each presented action and its progress. By allowing for more in-depth discussions, such an approach may lead to much more useful feedback from the research community to the units charged with the implementation of the measure in question.

In the case of UoC Guidelines on Permanent Employment Opportunities for Academic and Artistic Staff, for example, the members of the Committee were directly involved in a very hands-on manner in the drafting phase of this new policy, with further researchers in the Faculties being involved via the committee members (see Action 1).

In the implementation phase, researchers beyond the members of this Committee were also directly involved at the action level, be it in pilot projects or in working groups, such as in the implementation of personnel development reviews for researchers (see Action 5) or in the development of the newly proposed action to close the gender pay gap for R4 professorships at the UoC (see new Action 18).

In biannual meetings, status reports on the actions are presented by the responsible units. The Faculties and Central Units designate contact persons also at executive levels which are invited to participate in these meetings and engage in exchange and discussion of recent developments with respect to the HRS4R.

To further involve the research community, the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development biannually reports on current developments with respect to HRS4R in the Early Career Researchers Consilium and discusses selected actions in regular meetings with the Vice-Deans responsible for Academic Careers.

HRS4R Working and Steering Groups

Four high-ranking members of the university management form the small HRS4R steering group, to which the working group reports. In addition to the biannual meetings, the members of this steering group regularly discuss all HR matters of strategic relevance in their regular consultations, which are usually attended by the HRS4R coordinator. Additional steering group meetings may be convened to discuss the status of individual actions and to decide on any adjustments required, e.g. due to changing circumstances.

An HRS4R coordinator, together with administrative staff in charge of HR matters and overall strategy, ensured the implementation of the actions and monitored progress. Most of the daily tasks of the supervision of progress falls within the responsibility of the HRS4R coordinator, with the other group members facilitating communication within their respective units and beyond, and acting as multipliers of the HR Strategy for Researchers within the UoC administration. The members of the working group are also connected in their daily HR-related work and cooperate closely to prepare regular HRS4R reports.

Alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R

The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers is fully recognized at the UoC as our overarching strategy for all academic staff. In addition, the actions set out in the revised Action Plan as well as the new actions proposed at this stage are integral tasks of the respective unit in charge.

The website dedicated to our HR Strategy, which is accessible to all stakeholders, presents both the initial as well as the revised Action Plans, together with a process description and further information on HR policies at the UoC, including our current OTM-R guidelines. It continues to act as a reference point for all planned actions and the UoC's overall HR strategy.

With the Committee on HR Matters of Academic Staff acting as the HRS4R advisory board, a high-ranking advisory committee to the Senate of the UoC is directly involved in the process. This further ensures that all UoC policies are aligned with the HR Strategy for Researchers.

Ensuring the implementation of the proposed actions

The Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development supervises the implementation of the Action Plan in close cooperation with the Rector, the Chancellor and the Permanent Deputy of the Chancellor of the UoC. In addition to the annual HRS4R reports to the

Rectorate, the latter are regularly informed about the overall process and measure-related progress by the Vice-Rector. This enables the university management to react quickly and make adjustments, if required.

The Committee on HR Matters for Academic Staff has not only proven to be an ideal advisory body, which may request additional reports or distribute work assignments to different UoC units at any time. Acting as both participants and multipliers, its members are also directly involved in the HRS4R implementation process, for instance regarding the UoC Guidelines on Permanent Employment Opportunities for Academic and Artistic Staff (see Action 1).

Agreements between the Rectorate and Faculties to set specific strategic objectives are a common management tool at the UoC. Therefore, they may also prove useful to ensure the implementation of the proposed actions in the Faculties (e.g., Actions 1, 3 and 8).

Monitoring progress

Supervising the implementation of the HR Strategy for Researchers and monitoring its progress is the responsibility of the Vice-Rector for Academic Career and Staff Development, on whose behalf the HRS4R coordinator routinely documents all developments. An internal HRS4R monitoring and reporting system has been installed to complement all existing quality assurance structures and mechanisms. As implementation as well as supervision are core tasks of the responsible units and the Vice-Rectorate, the additional specific HRS4R monitoring tools as defined in the initial and revised Action Plans of the UoC could be lean and efficient.

Twice a year, the responsible units hand in a status report on the actions in the Vice-Rectorate for Academic Career and Staff Development. These reports document new developments but also possible delays in the progress of the actions. The HRS4R coordinator collects these reports and prepares a presentation on all actions which is being presented and discussed with responsible units in biannual meetings. Next to responsible units, responsible contact persons in the Faculties, Central Units and the Central Administration are also invited to participate in these meetings. The HRS4R steering group, the Committee on HR Matters for Academic Staff as well as the Rectorate will be regularly informed on the progress, also in view of the defined timeline. Delays may occur, particularly in broad participatory processes involving the stakeholders; these must be duly explained and justified to the aforementioned university bodies.

Measurement of progress in view of the next assessment?

Over the past few years of the implementation phase of the HR Strategy for Researchers at the UoC, it has become evident that the project structure as initially defined is very well suited to achieving the aims of this HR strategy and stimulating its further development. The UoC will therefore continue on this path and will continue to regularly monitor and document any progress as well as further developments in the established manner, always with a view to maintaining and even strengthening the link between the HR Strategy for Researchers and the R1 to R4 researchers at the UoC as the main stakeholders.

We measure progress by holding biannual meetings with those responsible for the actions to discuss the status of the measures. Additionally, each individual action is regularly evaluated to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with our goals.

Preparation for the internal review

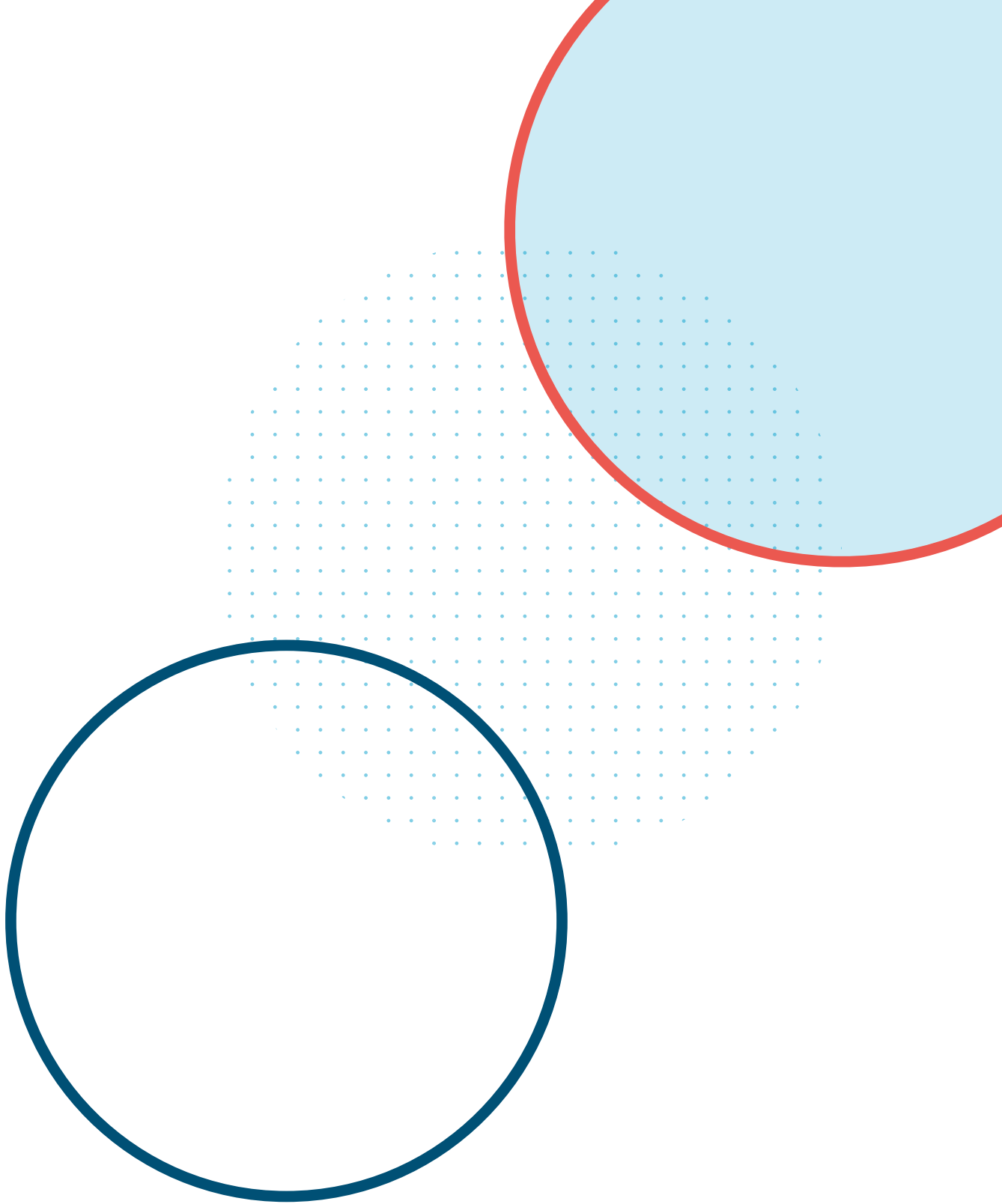
Our internal monitoring and reporting structures have proven highly successful over the past few years of the implementation phase of the HR Strategy for Researchers at the UoC. This will feed into the next external assessment of the HRS4R, the preparation of which will involve the university leadership on the one hand and representatives of the UoC research community on the other. We will continue to develop our monitoring and reporting structures in order minimize additional administrative work.

We hope that the evaluation will help us identify any potential blind spots and provide valuable insights to further develop our efforts in human resources. Specifically, we are looking for input that will enhance our approach with a European perspective, guiding us towards more effective and inclusive practices. Through this process, we aim to refine our strategies and continue improving the working environment for all staff, with particular attention to the international context.



In a joint effort of the university leadership, the central administration as well as the faculties and centres, the UoC has successfully implemented many of the initially defined actions in the past years, substantially extending actions as well as defining new ones in our attempt to continually improve working conditions for researchers of all stages. The revised Action Plan builds directly on our existing strategies and measures. The project structure with its clear specification of responsibilities has proven very apt to ensure timely and consistent implementation, monitoring and supervision, while persistently providing a strong link to the research community. The principles of the EU Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers are thus further embedded into the core of the UoC, its strategies and guidelines.





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