



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

HRS4R – The Human Resources
Strategy for Researchers
Strategy and Action Plan

November 2016

THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS (HRS4R)

INCORPORATING THE CHARTER AND CODE AT CORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Summary of HR4RS

The European Charter and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers were introduced by the European Commission on 11th March 2005. The 40 principles and recommendations are designed to ensure best practice in the employment and development of researchers.

Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) endorsed the Charter and Code on XXXXX through its Governing Body and at the same time endorsed the development of a comprehensive Researcher Career Framework to be based on the principles and recommendations of the Charter and Code.

To support the implementation of the Charter and Code the European Commission can award the 'HR Excellence in Research Award'. This logo is awarded to higher education institutions and funding agencies that have made significant progress in, and a plan for, implementing the Charter and Code. Applications for the HR Excellence in Research Award analyse performance of the institution against four themes:

- Ethical and Professional Aspects
- Recruitment
- Working Conditions
- Training

The analysis identifies gaps in adherence to the four themes (summarised in a Gap Analysis) and the institution then develops a Strategy and Action Plan to address the gaps (this document). Both are published on the applicant institution's website.

Following the submission of the Action Plan to the European Commission (EC) and successful assessment of the process followed and Strategy and Action Plan received, the EC will approve the use of the 'HR Excellence in Research Award'. The institution then implements the Strategy and Action Plan and conducts a self-assessment after two years. An external evaluation will occur at least every four years.

Summary of CIT

The history of Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) is a long and honourable one. The Royal Cork Institution, which may be regarded as the precursor of Cork Regional Technical College, was in existence as early as 1802 and received its Royal Charter in 1807. In 1909 it was decided to establish a Technical College which was opened in 1912 and named The Crawford Municipal Technical Institute, which then became the Cork Regional Technical College (CRTC) in October 1974. Then on 18 December 1997 the College was redesignated "Cork Institute of Technology" by Mr Micheál Martin TD, Minister for Education and Science, reflecting an increased demand for high level qualifications amongst both students and employers. CIT's main campus is in Bishopstown and its constituent colleges (Crawford College of Art and Design, Cork School of Music and the National Maritime College of Ireland) are distributed across the city. CIT is currently in the last phase of a process to establish the Munster Technological University.

CIT has in the region of 12,000 registered students with approximately 2,000 new entries year on year. Of these approximately 6,000 are full-time and the remaining are part-time. The part-time student population consists of a wide variety of students including access, evening and continued professional development students as well as a significant number studying music and drama at all levels. At present, CIT has 1,425 staff members of which 824 are academic staff.

In the recently introduced EU-sponsored ranking system (U-Multirank) for higher education CIT became the only Irish higher education Institute to achieve an “A” for co-publication of research with industry partners. Overall, the Institute finished in the top 10% of participants, receiving a total of 11 “A” grades.

CIT has approximately 100 contract research staff (those researchers not on an academic staff contract) and 170 research postgraduate students, of which 130 are on Structured PhD programmes. CIT’s annual expenditure on research & innovation is €18m and to date has a drawdown in Horizon 2020 of €4m, the largest amongst the Institutes’ of Technology and with the second highest success rating of all Irish third level institutions. CIT researchers co-publish with over 50 international institutions annually.

The CIT R&I system is significantly structured and is defined within the R&I Strategy. There are seven thematic areas, from ICT through to Creative and Performing Arts. There are three types of research “entity”. The largest entities, which are of long-term strategic relevance, are referred to as R&I *centres*. There are three R&I centres. The next level of entity is referred to as a *group*, of which there are currently nine. Groups are smaller in scale and may remain so, or grow to centre scale (or be amalgamated into a centre if the domain specialisation coherence makes sense). The final level is referred to as a *unit*. Units are individual staff members, mostly academic staff members. Under the Researcher Career Framework, entities apply for formal designation under the Institute Research and Innovation Entity Designation process.

Definition of a Researcher

CIT interprets postgraduate researchers as “early-stage” researchers in line with the European Commission definition and as such they are supported appropriately by the Charter and Code and also the CIT Researcher Career Framework. However, in the Irish Higher Education system researchers at postgraduate level are not, in most cases, employees but rather are registered as students and this is the case also in CIT. Thus whilst all researchers are considered to be professionals regardless of their employment status there is no implied transfer of employee rights or the creation of a relationship of employment as a result of applying the Charter and Code to the policies and practices in CIT.

Methodology

I – The Role Played by the CIT Researcher Career Framework

CIT applied to join the fourth cohort of the EU HR Strategy for Researchers Group (HRS4R) and, following acceptance, the Head of Research and a representative from the HR Office attended the kick-off meeting in Brussels on 29th October 2012. At that time CIT had embarked on a major programme to establish a Researcher Career Framework (RCF), lead by the Offices of Research and

HR, and the rationale for joining the HRS4R cohort was not only to receive the HR in Research Excellence badge but also to ensure that the CIT RCF would align with the EU Charter and Code.

Following almost two and a half years of developing the CIT RCF, during which time representatives from the offices of Research and HR attended further HRS4R meetings, on March 26th 2015 the Governing Body of CIT formally adopted (i) the EU Charter and Code, (ii) the need to submit for the HR Excellence in Research badge and (iii) noted the importance of the coherent connectivity between the EU Charter and Code and the CIT RCF.

Development of the CIT RCF (which is an ongoing project) involves the RCF Implementation Group jointly coordinated by the HR Manager and the Head of Research, consisting of:

- VP Finance and Administration (with overall responsibility for the HR Office)
- HR Manager
- Head of Research
- Dean of Graduate Studies
- R&I Committee of the Academic Council (including the President and the Registrar and VP for Academic Affairs)
- Institute Research and Innovation Steering Group – IRIS – (with representatives including the Academic Heads of Faculty and the VP for External Affairs)
- Industry Liaison Office
- Teaching and Learning Unit
- An external consultancy, ESN, to advise on the development of, and conduct training in the Performance Management and Personal Development aspects
- Heads of R&I centres and groups
- Contract researchers
- Postgraduates
- Union representing researchers
- Corporate and legal

The development of the CIT RCF involved the following key highlights:

- Two “town hall” meetings with contract researchers to explain the objectives
 - Involving 72 researchers, these meetings provided significant feedback on how researchers in CIT find issues such as career advice, opportunity for advancement, mentoring, remuneration, pensions, performance evaluation, training, opportunities to connect with the academic structures, etc.
- 11 sub-meetings with contract researchers
 - Involving 88 researchers, these meetings provided more extensive opportunities for detailed feedback
- Presentations to, and feedback from, the Institute’s Research and Innovation Steering Group and the R&I Committee of the Academic Council
- Production of the Draft RCF document covering:
 - Part I - Formal Designation of R&I Entities (part of the rationale for this being to establish clear reporting lines for contract researchers which also provides a structured approach to providing advice, training, and evaluating performance)
 - Part II – Recruitment Process (including roles and responsibilities for researchers and consistent and clear contracts associated to the four researcher grades of Research Assistant, Senior Researcher/Postdoc, Research Fellow and Senior Research Fellow)

- Part III – Performance Measurement and Personal Development (including establishing structures to equalise measurement of performance and programmes of personal development targeted at what the individual researcher’s needs are)
- Discussion of the Draft RCF document amongst the research community, from research managers to their staff and including senior management in CIT.
- A significant body of commentary about the state of research in CIT directly from the research community.

II – Developing the Gap Analysis

A small committee – the Gap Analysis Steering Committee (GASC) – consisting of the VP Finance and Administration, HR Manager, Head of Research, HR and Research Officers and ESN developed a draft Gap Analysis using the HRS4R template. The gaps were populated based on the comprehensive feedback from the development of the CIT RCF and through other vehicles (such as the many regular meetings held with the research community during training, mentoring, lunchtime presentations, face-to-face meetings, etc). It was felt that sending out questionnaires or holding further focus-group meetings at this time would not be productive, given the research community’s extensive engagement with the development of the CIT RCF. It was further considered that the decision to ensure the CIT RCF would be compliant with the EU Charter and Code from the outset of its development meant that there was a *de facto* gap analysis which could be used to generate the first draft of the HRS4R gap analysis.

The GASC addressed each of the 40 principles of the Charter and Code to determine whether a gap existed and how/if it could be addressed by asking a series of questions:

- Is this Principle relevant to CIT?
- Is there relevant legislation or national guidelines which make it possible to support or impede this principle? (Where this was unclear, advice was sought from outside the GASC, notably in terms of legal advice.)
- Does CIT have a policy in this area? (Provide a weblink if such exists and consider whether a weblink needs to be established if not.)
- What is the CIT practice in this area? (Provide a narrative to assist readers to understand the current status within the Institute.)
- Does a gap exist in CIT policy or practice? If a gap exists, how can it be addressed?

The initial results of the gap analysis were discussed amongst representatives of the research community for comments. Opportunities to raise queries and submit additional information to the members of the GASC provided the basis for the final gap analysis. Most of the comments received reiterated those made previously. The gap analysis and the Strategy and Action Plan that follows (this document) was signed off by the GASC.

ONGOING MONITORING

Ongoing monitoring of progress in implementing the HRS4R Strategy and Action Plan will be the responsibility of the CIT RCF Implementation Group. This ensures the Charter and Code are fully embedded in CIT’s approach to research. The RCF Implementation Group includes all the necessary constituencies and operates on the basis of regular communication and feedback, with overall responsibility for its operation lying jointly with the HR Manager and the Head of Research.

CIT HRS4R Summary Actions

The individual action items listed in the table on the following pages can be considered to be a combination of specific actions and the enhancement of the Institute's R&I ecosystem in line with the Charter and Code through the establishment of working groups or new positions in Research Ethics, for example.

The main themes emerging from the Gap Analysis of the Charter and Code and current CIT policies and practices are as follows:

- Research Integrity and Ethical considerations
- Training and Information Dissemination
- Gender Equality
- Researcher Career Framework
- Pensions

Below is a short summary of action items (in brackets) associated with each theme. Using this scheme will make it easier to combine initiatives to address thematic gaps.

Research Integrity and Ethical Considerations

- Establish Working Group on Research Integrity (1.0)
- Establish Research Integrity Officer position (1.3)
- Consider retention of data methodologies (1.6)

Training and Information Dissemination

- Establish People Management Framework (1.1, 4.0)
- Strengthen training/awareness programmes (1.4, 1.5, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 2.1, 3.1, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2)
- Strengthen Public dissemination training (1.11)

Gender Equality

- Develop Athena Swan actions (1.12, 1.13)
- Establish Equality Officer position (1.14)

Researcher Career Framework

- Complete roles and responsibilities definitions (2.0)
- Complete the roll-out of CIT RCF (1.15, 2.2, 3.0)

Pensions

- Support national initiatives (3.2, 3.3)

Action Item Number	Action Item	Gap Analysis Source Principle Number	Status	Owner	2016				2017				2018				2019				2020			
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Ethical & Professional Aspects																								
1.0	CIT will establish a special Working Group to consider the practical implications of the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity with a view to developing and implementing mechanisms to embed the principles across the Institute.	1	Open	Head of Research					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1.1	CIT will develop a People Management Framework training module for Researchers and Research Supervisors	2	Open	HR Manager; Head of Research					*															
1.2	CIT will maximise the benefits for its research community arising from its long term membership commitment to the Vitae organisation. The Research Office will produce an annual assessment report of the benefits to the Researchers.	2	Open	HR Manager; Head of Research; Dean of Graduate Studies									*				*				*			
1.3	CIT will establish a new position of Research Integrity Officer to ensure compliance with this and related elements of the Code and Charter	3	Open	HR Manager; Head of Research; Dean of Graduate Studies									*											
1.4	Develop and commission a formal practical Training/Induction Programme and workshops for the CIT research community to ensure a fuller understanding of research related internal operating procedures	4	Open	HR Manager; Industrial Liaison Officer; Technology Transfer Officer; Head of Research									*											
1.5	Develop increased awareness of the CIT internal processes and introduce greater formalism by providing a CIT designed Research Training module and follow up workshops	5	Open	HR Manager; Technology Transfer Officer						*														

Action	Action Item	Principle	Status	Owner	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020											
1.6	CIT will conduct a review of current practices in relation to retention of research data to determine what further actions are required in order to adhere to national best practice	6	Open	Head of Research; Finance Manager; IT Manager			*													
1.7	CIT will enhance the dissemination of information about good practice in research and research integrity through workshops for the research and wider community	7	Open	Head of Research; HR Manager; Research Integrity Officer (after Q2 2018)			*													
1.8	Improve the provision of institutional guidance in relation to open access publication	8	Open	Head of Research; Librarian.			*													
1.9	Enhance CIT's process for exploiting research results through open access via the Institute Library and other information repositories	8	Open	Head of Research; Librarian.			*													
1.10	Increase the awareness of existing training and support opportunities available to researchers that enable them to communicate their research to non-expert audiences	9	Open	Head of Research		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1.11	Extend the modules developed by the CIT Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) to include methods by which tools can be utilised by researchers to enhance presentation and other skills to the general public.	9	Open	Head of TLU; Head of Research			*													
1.12	Commission a scoping document aimed at assessing the readiness of CIT for an Athena Swan award.	10	Open	HR Manager		*														
1.13	Review action items for the HR and Research Offices arising from the scoping document in advance of a proposed submission for the Athena Swan award	10	Open	HR Manager; Head of Research			*													
1.14	Establishment of a CIT Equality Officer	10	Open	HR Manager				*												
1.15	Complete the implementation of the pilot RCF, including the roll out of PMPD for contract researchers at CIT. This will encompass additional training programmes/workshops and mentoring as appropriate.	11, 28, 36	Open	HR Manager; Head of Research; Head of TLU				*												

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					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Recruitment					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2.0	Revise researcher roles and responsibilities in accordance with the RCF	14	Open	HR Manager; Head of Research; Heads of Research Groups and Centres							*													
2.1	CIT will continue to support the mobility of researchers through provision of up-to-date relevant information and resources	18	Open	Erasmus Office; Head of Research;					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
2.2	While significant progress has been made in completing the implementation of the Institute's RCF, particularly in the area of postdoctoral appointments, ongoing assessment will be carried out during the pilot phase which is expected to end in Q4, 2017.	21	Open	HR Manager; Head of Research; Heads of Research Groups and Centres			*																	

Action Item Number	Action Item	Gap Analysis Source Principle Number	Status	Owner	2016				2017				2018				2019				2020			
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Working Conditions					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
3.0	A series of personal development programmes have been completed as part of the pilot RCF. The feedback from the pilot will be incorporated into the final RCF	22	Open	HR Manager; Head of Research; Heads of Research Groups and Centres								*												
3.1	The CIT Strategic Plan, R&I Strategy and Health and Safety Statement will require ongoing dissemination to ensure that existing staff are reminded of them, and also as these are reviewed and amended over time	23	Open	Head of Research; Heads of Research Groups and Centres; HR Manager					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
3.2	Any actions on pensions must be negotiated on a national and coordinated basis and CIT commits to advocating for equal treatment of all researchers across the full spectrum of Irish Higher Education	26	Open	HR Manager in association with the Technological Higher Education Association, (THEA)					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
3.3	For contract researchers with pensions there is a need to ensure that CIT supports the best options for their portability. CIT will examine new options including the possibility to join the Resaver initiative. CIT will also work with THEA to address the issues of Pension and Social Security at a national level	29	Open	HR Manager; Head of Research; THEA					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
3.4	Build greater awareness of the opportunities for teaching available in the Institute and the importance of teaching as part of a researcher's career development.	33	Open	Heads of Department; Heads of School; HR Manager; Head of Research.					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Action Item Number	Action Item	Gap Analysis Source Principle Number	Status	Owner	2016				2017				2018				2019				2020			
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Training					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
4.0	Formalise the training of supervisors and senior researchers in relation to their supervisory and managerial duties in accordance with the People Management Framework	37	Open	Head of Research; HR Manager; Dean of Graduate Studies							*													
4.1	Provide ongoing training and development opportunities for all Researchers and Research supervisory personnel through the formalisation of training modules within the rolled-out RCF.	38	Open	Head of Research; HR Manager							*													
4.2	The Institute recognises that this is an area that requires on-going monitoring and development. Appropriate reviews of the range of programmes provided will be organised by the HR Office	39	Open	HR Manager					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*