



Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Chorcaí  
Cork Institute of Technology



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

HRS4R – The Human Resources  
Strategy for Researchers

**Strategy and Action Plan**

**2017 - 2021**

**Original**

**February 2017**

**Revised**

**March 2019**

## THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS (HRS4R)

### INCORPORATING THE CHARTER AND CODE AT CORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

## 1. Introduction

Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) was granted the prestigious EURAXESS Excellence in Research award in February 2017. Integral to the process was the development, publication and implementation of a comprehensive CIT HRS4R Strategy and Action Plan. Institutions in receipt of the EURAXESS award have 24 months to begin implementing the actions outlined in their initial Strategy and Action Plan and to submit an Internal Interim Assessment Review Report on their progress to the European Commission (EC).

CIT has now commenced the Internal Interim Assessment phase and has updated its initial HRS4R Strategy and Action Plan to reflect both progress made to date and to confirm future commitments.

### Background to HRS4R

The European Charter and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers was introduced by the EC on 11<sup>th</sup> 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 March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015 through its Governing Body and at the same time endorsed the development of a comprehensive Researcher Career Framework (RCF) 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.

## A Summary View 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 15,000 registered students with approximately 2,300 new entries year on year. Of these approximately 7,000 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 approximately 1500 staff members of which 900 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 203 research postgraduate students, of which 135 are on Structured PhD programmes. CIT’s annual expenditure on research & innovation (R&I) is €14m and to date has a drawdown in Horizon 2020 of €6.4m, 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 eight 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.

## 2. Process leading to the EURAXESS award

### Development of the CIT Researcher Career Framework (RCF)

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 29<sup>th</sup> October 2012. At that time CIT had embarked on a major programme to establish a Researcher Career Framework (RCF), led by the Offices of Research and HR, 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 RCF, during which time representatives from the offices of Research and HR attended further HRS4R meetings, on March 26<sup>th</sup> 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 RCF involved an 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 group, ESN Ltd., to advise on the development of, and conduct training in the Performance Management and Personal Development
- Heads of R&I centres and groups
- Contract researchers
- Postgraduates
- Union representing researchers
- Corporate and legal

The development of the 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.

### 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.

### Ongoing Monitoring

The ongoing monitoring of progress in implementing the HRS4R Strategy and Action Plan has overall responsibility from within 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 scheduled communication and feedback, with overall responsibility for its operation lying jointly with the HR Manager and the Head of Research.

## 3. The Internal Interim Assessment Review

### What is it?

The granting of the EURAXESS award represents the end of the Initial Phase of the HRS4R procedure and the start of the Implementation Phase. Institutions in receipt of EURAXESS accreditation have 24 months to commence implementing the actions outlined in their initial Strategy and Action Plan and report on their progress to the EC. This formal EC reporting process is called the Internal Interim Assessment Review.

The institution indicates how it has progressed and embedded into its policies and practices the actions set out in the initial Strategy and Action Plan. It can also use the process to identify new actions for the next 3 years. The institution must publish the revised/updated version of the Strategy and Action plan (including the OTM-R policy) on the institution's website.

The EC forward the Internal Interim Assessment Review to three peer assessors from three different countries other than the applicant country. The EC Assessors complete a consensus report for the Institute, including highlighting recommendations on how to continue the implementation of the revised Strategy and Action plan for the next 36 months.

### Why is it important?

The purpose of the internal review is to allow the participating institutions to reflect and document progress, alter actions or timing of actions if necessary as well as to offer the opportunity to create new actions for the upcoming years.

## What's next?

After the Institute receives the consensus report with the outcome of the Interim Assessment, it will continue the implementation of the revised Strategy and Action plan based on the recommendations provided by the EC assessors and will report to the EC on the progress within the next 36 months. At this time the Institute will be subject to an external EC review.

The HRS4R process will then continue in a cyclical way, with new Internal Reviews (similar to the ones for the Interim Assessment) every 36 months for Award Renewal (alternating the organisation of site visits).

## Internal Review process at CIT

The internal review was prepared through the ongoing mechanism of implementing the RCF and by eliciting feedback from researchers, research managers, central function units and academics. Six-weekly meetings of the GASC group considered the inputs from the research community via the HR and Research Offices. Three further meetings between, HR, The Research Office and ESN were held specifically to prepare the internal review documentation. In addition the RCF Implementation Committee, which is a very large and inclusive group established to provide overall insight on the RCF, met twice since the HRS4R EURAXESS badge was awarded to CIT and provided input which was used in assessing progress against targets in the Strategy and Action Plan.

## 4. HRS4R Action Plan - Summary

The original HRS4R Strategy and Action Plan (February 2017) encompassed some twenty seven individual action items across four separate EURAXESS defined themes.

- **Ethical and Professional Aspects** – 16 Action Items
- **Recruitment** – 3 Action Items
- **Working Conditions** - 5 Action Items
- **Training** – 3 Action Items

Commencing in January 2017 the Action Plan is set for completion by December 2021.

The EU requires institutions in receipt of EURAXESS accreditation to complete a HRS4R Implementation Phase Internal Review after two years. This is self-assessment process, and the outcome/results are forwarded to the EC for consideration. CIT has completed the Interim Review and are awaiting a response from the EC.

The individual action items listed in the table on the following pages are a combination of specific actions and the enhancement of the Institute's R&I ecosystem in line with the EURAXESS Charter and Code. Originally developed in 2017 following the Gap Analysis process the tables have now been updated and revised consequent to the EC Internal Interim Assessment process. The data presented in the table reflects progress made to date with respect to each individual action item and reaffirms future commitments and implementation dates. To date 10 of the Action Items are fully complete with the remainder either in progress and/or ongoing.

<b>Action Item #</b>	<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Gap Analysis Source Principle #</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Responsible Unit</b>	<b>Indicator(s) / Target</b>	<b>Current status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>Ethical &amp; Professional Aspects</b>							
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	2017 Q2	Research Office	Establish a Working Group	Complete	On-going
1.1	CIT will develop a People Management Framework training module for Researchers and Research Supervisors	2	2017 Q3	HR Office, Research Office	Develop a training module	In progress	Will become part of the CIT Research Week/Month from 2019 Q4
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	2018 Q2	HR Office, Research Office, Graduate Studies	Produce an annual report	Complete	Will be reviewed annually in Q2
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	2018 Q2	HR Office, Research Office, Graduate Studies	To create a post	In Progress	Exploring joint appointment for RIO within regional/sectoral higher educational institutions

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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	2018 Q2	HR Office, Industrial Liaison, Technology Transfer, Research Office	Develop a Training/Induction Programme	In progress	Embedded into the Institutional and Departmental induction programmes On-going annually in Q4
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	2017 Q4	HR Office, Technology Transfer	Offer a CIT designed training module and workshops	In progress	Research Integrity training module in place since 2018 Q4. To-date 109 contract researchers have been trained
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	2017 Q4	HR Office, Research Office, IT, Library	Identify the appropriate Software supports. Create a new post in the Library to support Metadata and Research Data Services.	In progress	Library position advertised; Software purchased
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	2017 Q3	Research Office, HR Office	Offer On-line training programme and workshops	In Progress	Research Integrity training module (Epigeum) in place since 2018 Q4
1.8	Improve the provision of institutional guidance in relation to open access publication	8	2017 Q3	Research Office, Library	Create a new post in the Library to support Metadata and Research Data Services	In Progress	Library position advertised
1.9	Enhance CIT's process for exploiting research results through open access via the Institute Library and other information repositories	8	2017 Q3	Research Office, Library	Create a new post in the Library to support Metadata and Research Data Services (cf.1.8)	In Progress	Library position advertised; Software purchased

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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	2017 Q3	Research Office	Develop a Communication Module	In progress	Communication Module delivered in Q1 and Q3 2018. On-going annually.
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	2017 Q3	TLU, Research Office	Develop a Communication Module	Complete	Communication Module delivered in Q1 and Q3 2018. On-going annually.
1.12	Commission a scoping document aimed at assessing the readiness of CIT for an Athena Swan award.	10	2016 Q4	HR Office	Commission an Athena Swan(AS) scoping document	Complete	Formal AS application made in November 2018
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	2017 Q1	HR Office; Research Office	Apply for Athena Swan	Complete	Submission completed in November 2018
1.14	Establishment of a CIT Equality Officer (EO)	10	2018 Q4	HR Office	Create EO post	In progress	Part of the AS application process and is currently under review
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	2017 Q4	HR Office; Research Office; TLU	Pilot and roll out of RCF	Complete	Changed strategy from PMPD to Professional & Personal Development Programme (PPD) as result of completion of pilot project

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<b>Recruitment</b>							
2.0	Revise researcher roles and responsibilities in accordance with the RCF.	14	2017 Q3	HR Office; Research Office; Research Groups and Centres	To agree a revised document with all parties	Complete	Implemented in Q3 2018
2.1	CIT will continue to support the mobility of researchers through provision of up-to-date relevant information and resources.	18	2017 Q1	Erasmus Office; Research Office		Complete	On-going
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	2016 Q4	HR Office; Research Office; Research Groups and Centres	Ongoing assessment of the RCF will be carried out during the pilot phase	Complete	

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<b>Working Conditions</b>							
3.0	A series of personal development programmes has been completed as part of the pilot RCF. The feedback from the pilot will be incorporated into the final RCF	22	2017 Q4	HR Office; Research Office; Research Groups and Centres		Complete	
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	2017 Q1	HR Office; Research Office; Research Groups and Centres	On-going updates	In Progress	Part of the Institutional/Departmental induction process
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	2017 Q1	HR with the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA)		In progress	Ongoing sectoral issue that cannot be resolved locally
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	2017 Q1	HR Office, Research Office, THEA	Offer pension advise and options	In Progress	Decided not to join the Resaver scheme as it is inequitable to some Researchers
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	2017 Q1	HR Office, Research Office, Departments; Schools	Awareness of teaching opportunities	In progress	Allowed to teach up to 4 hours/week

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<b>Training</b>							
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	2017 Q3	HR Office, Research Office, Graduate Studies	Develop a training module	In progress	Become part of the Research Week/Month in 2019 Q4
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	2017 Q3	Research Office, HR Office	Develop training modules	In progress	Training modules will be delivered as part of the PPD programme
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	2017 Q1	HR Office, Research Office	Ongoing review of all Training Programmes on offer	In progress	Ongoing