Université libre de Bruxelles - ULB
EURAXESS Rights
European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers
Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)
May 2013

In regards to its member states, the European Commission has drafted a list of rights and obligations for researchers and their employers, in order to increase mobility and expand methods of best practice in the area of research. These recommendations can be found in the *European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers* (hereafter referred to as *Charter* and *Code*).

Based on these documents, ULB carried out a diagnostic assessment of its human resource strategy for researchers, and then made a proposal for a structured action plan centred on five main themes. This document will describe, for each theme, the assessment made and the proposed action plan. The actions are ranked by order of priority within each theme and sub section. The starting and finishing dates proposed in the final table complete the information on the prioritisation of actions.

1. The procedure for drafting the HRS4R action plan at ULB

Following the ratification of the *Charter* and *Code* by the *Conseil des Recteurs des universités francophones de Belgique* (CReF) and the *Fonds de la recherche scientifique* (F.R.S.-FNRS) back in 2006, three inter-university task forces were set up to pilot EURAXESS Rights, Jobs and Services, and coordinate the work of the universities.

On the 29th March 2010, the interuniversity task force on "EURAXESS Rights" suggested that universities should develop an internal working group to ensure the smooth running and follow-up of the project.

At ULB, this working group was made up of the Vice-Rector for Research, several academics and researchers together with members of the central administration (Human Resources, Research, and Financial Administration Departments). The group met five times in 2010 (on 7th January, 29th March, 28th June, 7th October, and 25th November) and made a diagnostic assessment of the human resource strategy for researchers, plus the initial draft of an action plan. A written report on the outcomes of the work undertaken was submitted to the European Commission in December 2010 and to the University Research Council on 22nd February 2011.

On 18th December 2012, the Research Council set up a new task force composed of the Vice-Rector for Research, the Vice-rector for Academic Affairs and career development, a member of the academic staff, a member of the scientific staff, "EURAXESS Services" and "EURAXESS Jobs" contact persons at ULB, together with members of the central administration (Human Resources and Research). The role of the task force was to devise an action plan, based on the recommendations of

the internal working group, and to submit it to the European Commission. It was this action plan that was presented for discussion to the Research Council on 19th March 2013, and then approved, in its amended version, by the Research Council on 23rd April 2013 and the University Board on 13th May 2013.

2. Missions of the University and governance (see Charter, pp. 45-48)

Diagnostic Assessment

Article one of the ULB statutes clearly proclaims the principle of free enquiry and debate. This principle assumes independence of judgment and the rejection of authoritarian argument. It therefore promotes understanding and mutual tolerance, as well as respect.

Thanks to this principle of openness, ULB subscribes to Belgian laws and decrees regarding non-discrimination (gender, age, ethnic, national or social origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, handicap, political inclination, social or economic states, etc.). It applies furthermore an active non-discrimination policy. As an example, it ensures good practice is maintained in both national and international recruitment of researchers and has developed a proactive gender equality policy. In this context, the Board has appointed an advisor to the Rector and President of ULB on gender policy; an annual report on gender balance and its evolution is provided to the Board.

This principle of openness, a hallmark of ULB, is also reflected in the constitution of the Board and the Executive Board which, ever since 1968 (ULB was the Belgian pioneer in this domain) have been elected by all the members of the University, and which are composed of representatives of all categories of university staff (lecturers, permanent or temporary researchers, students, plus administrative, technical, specialised and management staff). This rule is also implemented for other participatory bodies across the University; be at institutional level (Research Council) or at faculty level (Departmental or Faculty Executive committees and Councils, etc.). It should be noted however that the composition of the decision-making bodies is not balanced in terms of gender. In 2012-2013, 13 of the 45 members of the Board were women. In the Research Council, 4 of the 21 voting representatives were women.

As an extension to the principle of free enquiry, freedom of research constitutes another essential value of the University, so long as it is exercised, of course, within the limits imposed by existing legislation, and the ethical principles linked to the profession or domain. The latter are clearly defined in the *Code for ethical conduct and integrity in research, for knowledge and technology transfer, and the creation of spin-offs at* ULB (approved by the Board on 22/11/2010), under the control of the Commission for deontology and Integrity in Research, and the Council for Integrity.

ULB is committed to fulfilling three missions: teaching, research and service to society. The responsibilities of each academic are include activities related to each of these three missions. The strategic objectives related to the university's second mission (research) are clearly defined by the Board of the University and made available to all research staff via the website of the university (available also to people outside ULB) and via the annual reports of the Research Council. Researchers at all levels also participate in the 5-year evaluation of research units at ULB, and in the

definition of the 5-year strategic plan for each Faculty, which defines the priorities for the recruitment of academic staff.

ULB has developed various information tools (more especially via its InfoFin database and weekly newsletter) and the Research Administration Office supplies administrative assistance for researchers seeking funding and wishing to develop their research. Those who obtain funding subsequently have an obligation towards the University and/or their funding organisations to provide information and reports, according to a strict procedure, on both the progress of their research and the human resources and financial management at their disposal.

Where the third mission is concerned, all questions regarding intellectual property and knowledge and technology transfer are controlled by the *Regulations pertaining to property, protection and valorisation of research results undertaken at ULB* and the *Regulations as applied to intellectual property and valorisation and ensuing copyright legislation of work undertaken at ULB* (approved by the Board 7/07/2008). In order to enhance greater awareness amongst researchers, ULB offers training programmes for both doctoral candidates and established researchers that are run by members of the Technology Transfer Office in its Research Department, which plays a major role in assisting researchers wishing to better exploit their results off campus. With regard to the dissemination of research results, ULB requires its research staff to use several tools: the institutional repository Di-Fusion, the online repository of PhD theses BICTEL, the inventory of research units, and use of the institutional procedure for protection of intellectual property. Furthermore, CRef and the LIEU network (Intra University Enterprise Liaison, a network of technology transfer offices in francophone universities) have set up an interuniversity directory of research units and laboratories.

Many other services to society are offered by ULB, such as advisory/consultancy services for society and political authorities, international cooperation, knowledge and technology transfer, outreach activities (press interviews, lectures and debates open to the public, museums and the ULB Centre for scientific culture, important events such as the *Spring Festival for Science*, or the *Researchers' Night*, and the Inter-Age University called CEPULB…), etc.

Action Plan

The diagnostic assessment above enabled us to identify the following areas for improvement.

As regards information for researchers:

1. Make researchers more aware, as soon as they are hired, of the institutional strategic objectives (special welcome day for new researchers);
2. Post on university's website the *European Charter for Researchers* and the *Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers*, and information about this to newly hired researchers;
3. A better organisation and dissemination of information about rules, regulations and best practice regarding knowledge and technology transfer (protection of intellectual property, patents, spin-offs, etc.), via a single handbook.

As regards gender balance:

4. Proposals for an improved gender balance within the decision-making bodies;
5. Systematic development and publication of statistics on gender at all levels of research activity;
6. Creation of a directory of research on gender issues undertaken at the University, and an increase in the visibility given to this.

As regards the dissemination of research results:

7. Evaluation and perpetuation of the institutional procedure for five-year evaluation of research;
8. Implementation of a new tool for the presentation of research, including research units and platforms;
9. Assessment of experience and possible revision of the *Code for ethical conduct and integrity in research, for knowledge and technology transfer, and the creation of spin-offs*.

3. Recruitment (see Charter p. 57 and Code pp. 58-61)

Diagnostic assessment

ULB adheres to the principles as presented in the *Code*.

Recruitment procedures are open and transparent. ULB meets the legal requirements regarding qualifications required and calculation of seniority.

It also publishes its academic and research positions at international level. In this context, the Board decided on 22nd April 2013 that all vacancies for research positions would therefore be published on the EURAXESS Jobs database. They will be widely advertised at international level and contain all information details as recommended by the *Code*, i.e. a description of working conditions and rights, and perspectives for career development. For doctoral candidates, specific conditions for admission will be included alongside conditions regarding qualifications.

The composition of selection committees and the selection procedure may vary depending on the type of position.

Applications for permanent academic positions are analysed by international committees that will respect gender balance wherever possible. These committees may be inter-disciplinary or inter sectorial if the position so justifies. Recruitment is generally organised in two phases: drawing up of a short list based on the review of written applications and CVs, then an interview possibly coupled with a public lecture.

For temporary positions, the selection procedure does not always depend on ULB (for example with FNRS post-doctoral positions). If this is the case, a joint recruitment committee is usually set up, either at University level (mini-ARC scholarship for example), Faculty level (assistantships), or at the level of the research team involved (positions within a specific research project). All these

committees examine the applications and proceed with the analysis of possible letters of reference and an interview of candidates who passed the initial screening.

In regard to selection criteria, all committees are invited to take into account the complete professional track of each applicant, including all the categories mentioned in the standard model of a CV at ULB, even if these criteria are not fully explicit to applicants[1] : teaching and research career (positions and mandates), publications, scientific presentations, international experience and other forms of professional mobility, international collaboration, membership of societies or editorial boards, supervisory experience, periods spent abroad, awards, knowledge and technology transfer, development cooperation, outreach activities, research management (head of a research centre, organisation of scientific events, organisation of international PhD programmes…), participation in management/governance of the university, etc. International experience is particularly important for postdoctoral and academic positions.

It is vital that committees work in total neutrality especially as regards gender. The appointment of trained observers, in charge of ensuring neutrality within selection committees with respect to gender helps to avoid gender bias.

Action Plan

The diagnostic assessment above enabled us to identify the following areas for improvement.

Dissemination and completeness of job vacancies:

10. Implementation of the decision to publish job vacancies and research grants on the EURAXESS Jobs portal.

Information for applicants:

11. Creation of a guide for applicants, including those applicants seeking promotion, giving legal information (salary scales, rules regarding seniority and qualifications…) and full details of criteria and selection procedures.

Recruitment procedures:

12. Setting up of training programmes for personnel regarding gender neutrality during recruitment;
13. New on-line version of the institutional CV, to be made more complete and usable, and covering the three main missions and mobility;
14. Reflexion on whether it would be appropriate to standardise letters of motivation and also interviews for candidates retained following the initial screening;
15. Definition of a coherent policy on letters of reference;
16. Reflexion on standardising the recruitment of assistants by a Faculty recruitment committee;
17. Definition of a university policy regarding responses to non-selected candidates.

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[1] A list of criteria for promotion to the position of senior assistant and for academic promotion is available in the *Text presenting the provisions for career of researchers and academics* (pp. 58-59), but this is not easily accessible to applicants. Also, there is no grid with clear criteria for people applying for scientific and academic positions.

4. Status of research staff and career development (see Charter pp. 49-56)

Introduction

To facilitate understanding of points 3 and 4, it seems appropriate to recall the different categories of research staff at ULB, and the inherent funding mechanisms:

Doctoral candidates

- PhD grant (100% research):
    - With funding from/via ULB (PAI, ARC, ERC, other agreements…)
    - With a mandate from FRS-FNRS ("aspirant" FRS-FNRS, FRIA, FRESH, Télévie, IISN…)
    - Other grants, in particular from abroad
- ULB Assistantship (50% research/50% teaching)
- Work contract
- Without pay:
    - Self-funded PhD
    - Grantee finishing their thesis, whose funding/ contract has ended

Post-doctoral Researchers

- Post-doctoral grant (reserved for post-docs arriving from abroad)
- Work contract:
    - With funding from/via ULB (PAI, ARC, ERC, other agreements…)
    - With a mandate from FRS-FNRS ("Chargé de recherche" FRS-FNRS, research projects, IISN…)

''Senior researcher''

- Permanent contract, financed by outside funds (This type of contract is intended for senior researchers, financed by outside funds, who have benefitted from more than two fixed-term contracts at ULB. It should be noted that this type of contract is dependent on the funding of projects and the centre for which the researcher is working).

Academics

- Permanent appointment as lecturer/researcher (*cf.* the three missions outlined in point 1)
- Permanent mandates from FRS-FNRS ("Chercheur qualifié", "Maître de recherche", "Directeur de recherche")

Administrative, technical, management and specialised staff (PATGS)

- Fixed-term or permanent contract:
    - With funding from/via ULB (PAI, ARC, ERC, other agreements…)
    - With a mandate from FRS-FNRS (research projects, IISN...)

Unpaid mandates

- Scientific collaborator : honorary mandate for researchers employed elsewhere
- Guest professor/researcher: status awarded to retired ULB professors or researchers still carrying out research at the university
- Visiting researcher: status awarded to professors or researchers on leave at ULB and whose salary is not paid by ULB.

Please note that this strategy does not deal with the issue of staff whose sole role is to teach, or with staff at the university hospitals[2].

Diagnostic Assessment

Everyone in the above categories is a member of ULB staff, with the exception of ''unpaid mandates'' and doctoral candidates who are unpaid or who benefit from international funding that is not managed by ULB. Unpaid researchers are insured on campus and enjoy access to certain services (libraries, email account, etc.). All doctoral candidates have student status and therefore benefit from the full range of services (insurance, social and medical services, sports facilities, restaurants, libraries, email, etc.).[3]

Every member of research enjoys the rights and benefits applicable to their status, such as representation within the institution, social security (including grant holders), seniority rules, and official salary scales, access to facilities and services for staff (hospital, day-nursery, restaurants, sports halls, etc.). For doctoral candidates and post-docs, the conditions offered are particularly attractive considering international standards. For administrative, technical, management and specialised staff (PATGS) recruited by the university, there are no real legal provisions for gratification of the PhD degree even if their position would justify this. In the case of academic staff who have spent part of their career abroad, the recently modified Belgian legislation on pensions may, in some cases, seem somewhat unattractive and make it difficult to hire people.

In general, stability of the research staff is a complex problem. It is, of course, not possible to give all temporary staff permanent positions, given the pyramidal nature of careers in research, and the lack of available research funding that ULB is confronted with. ULB takes care not to sign grant agreements or contracts of less than a year for institutional contracts and mandates, so as to avoid overtly unstable situations. Furthermore over the past few years, the institution has strived to reduce the number of part-time assistantships that only allow a quarter-time to be spent on research, which is far too little for a PhD thesis to be undertaken under good conditions. That said, there is no systematic policy about this as yet at ULB.

The question of stability of employment is of particular importance for researchers on permanent contracts, whose salary is not directly funded by the university's own budget. These researchers are employed using "outside funding", and their contract is dependent on a non-recurrent source of outside funding. These experienced researched (scientifically and technically) play an essential role in

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[2] The strategy does cover research staff at the faculty of Medicine.
[3] Funded doctoral candidates are regarding as both students and scientific staff.

the continuity of the activity of many laboratories and also in the transfer of technology or knowledge, which society regards as one of the missions of the university. However, the career of these researchers does not receive sufficient social recognition, apart from the general regulations applicable to work contracts. Given the non-recurring nature of the funding (often annual) with which they are recruited, these researchers are exposed to repeated terminations of contract, and run the risk of being made redundant until new funding is available. This leads to tension and stress that ULB tries to minimise through the setting-up of a Solidarity Fund, run by the Management committee for staff on outside funding (CGPFE), bringing together representatives from the university's central administration and research supervisors, plus an observer designated by the Works Council. The Fund makes it possible to avoid sending notice of dismissal even when continuity of funding has not been secured. The Fund also makes it possible to offer a notice period over and above the legal minimum.

Where career prospects are concerned, the situation depends on how far on the researcher is in his or her career.

The *PhD Charter* ratified by the Board (12th November 2012 and 18th March 2013) clearly defines the pivotal role shared by the supervisor and the supervisory committee in helping to prepare the future career of the doctoral candidate, whether in or outside Academia. In addition, since 2009, the University has developed transversal training programmes for doctoral candidates, the contents of which can be exploited whatever their career prospects may be (scientific communication in English, intellectual property and technology and knowledge transfer, etc.). The ULB Career Centre, meanwhile, also organises training sessions on project management, CV-writing and job interviews, etc. Moreover, as the official branch of the French "Association Bernard Gregory" (ABG), it acts as local "ABG adviser" responsible for assisting doctoral candidates and holders in finding employment. In this context, the Career Centre is working on a system of individualised coaching for candidates wanting to clarify their professional objectives. Lastly, the INTERREG IV "PRODOC" project, financed by the European Union from 2009 to 2012, made it possible to organise specialised seminars for doctoral candidates (CV, job interviews, digital identity, etc.), and also an annual forum for PhD holders on employment outside the academic sphere; other job forums are set up by Faculty and professional associations to facilitate contacts between potential employers and graduates, in particular doctoral candidates. An interuniversity project is underway to continue PRODOC activities and a request for financial support from the authorities has been submitted by the Rectors of francophone universities in Belgium.

Post-docs also have access to the services and training sessions offered by the ULB Career Centre and PRODOC. In addition, the supervisor plays an essential role in helping post-docs to develop their academic careers. This role, however, is not yet clearly defined.

There are currently no specific career development tools for "senior researchers", even though their sources of funding are temporary. If made unemployed, these workers can receive support guidance but their effectiveness remains to be analysed.

Finally, for academics and PATGS staff, possibilities of promotion are clearly outlined on the University's website.

Action Plan

The diagnostic assessment above enabled us to identify the following areas for improvement.

On the legal level:

ULB cannot take any decision that would go against the legislation but can however attempt to improve the existing legislation:

18. Negotiations with political authorities with a view to improving the professional status of "senior researchers";
19. Negotiations with political authorities with a view to achieving recognition of the PhD degree for members of the PATGS, when a PhD is required for the position.

ULB internal statutes:

20. Registration of all "visiting" and "guest" researchers and professors;
21. A limit to the number of half-time assistantships, in favour of full-time positions.

Career stability prospects:

22. Support in preparation of their future career for doctoral candidates and post-docs, with the setting up of specific coaching for both categories;
23. Statistical analysis of the careers of "senior researchers" and senior technical staff on outside funding, and evaluation of the support offered to these senior staff when they become unemployed;
24. Reflection on the end of career for these categories of staff;
25. After 15 years of work under contract, or when a " senior researcher " reaches the age of 45, a mandatory regular meeting with the head of the department , the Dean, the Human Resources Department of and the Financial Administration Department to review the researcher's career, his/her present contract and future professional prospects;
26. Provision of specific tools for "senior researchers" to help them reorient their career outside the university.

5. Working conditions (see Charter pp. 49-56)

Diagnostic Assessment

In general, academic and research staff enjoy considerable autonomy in the organisation of their work. Moreover, Belgian legislation on flexibility is applicable to members of research staff covered by the legislation (part-time, parental leave…) and ULB has developed certain social funds, such as the maternity fund to cover the difference between actual salary and benefits received from the mutuality during maternity leave. ULB has also devised certain tools to enable staff to better combine work and family life: a crèche, activities for children during school holidays, etc. It should be noted , however, that availability of places in the crèche is insufficient and that the opening times, while long (7:30am-6:30pm), do not always cover the working hours of lecturers and logistics staff (Monday to Friday 8am-9pm and Saturday morning).

Where prevention and safety are concerned, the Central Prevention and Safety Department (SCPPT) looks after security and well-being in the work place for research staff. In the event of complaints or appeals, various people can be contacted depending on the problem:

- The head of department, followed by the Dean
- The Human Resources Department
- The general commissioner
- The board of appeal
- The prevention adviser
- ''Confidential counsellors''
- The trade unions

It should be noted that a special procedure is foreseen for doctoral candidates, given their particular situation, which can be found in ULB's *PhD Charter* and *PhD Regulations*.

The working conditions of **doctoral candidates** are clearly defined in ULB's *PhD Charter* as regards the relationship between the doctoral candidate and his thesis supervisor and supervisory committee, the material and financial conditions under which the thesis is carried out, the monitoring of progress, the duration of the thesis, integration in the research team, the procedure to be followed in the event of conflicts, and preparation of the doctoral candidate's subsequent career. Doctoral candidates are fully integrated in research teams and can therefore officially be authors or co-authors, depending on their discipline, of articles, patents, and other research results that they (co-)produce. They may also use laboratory equipment, within the limits of their competence. The salaries and grants paid by or via ULB are standardised, but the financial conditions surrounding support for research may vary depending on their status. Doctoral candidates with a grant from FRS-FNRS, FRIA, and FRESH,... benefit from operating costs that enable them to contribute to funding of their experiments or attend scientific meetings abroad. For those on a grant from the University (PAI, ARC...) and under contract, the research is generally funded by the research centre. Where assistants are concerned, the situation varies from one Faculty to another. And for non-funded doctoral candidates there is no policy for funding operational costs.

ULB offers doctoral candidates comprehensive supervision, including regular meetings with their thesis supervisor and an annual meeting (at least) with the supervisory committee. During the annual meeting, the supervisory committee assesses the opportunity, in the student's interest, of pursuing their doctoral research the following year. Furthermore, an intermediate evaluation is organised mid-way through the thesis to assess the progress made. In addition to the evaluation, an intermediate report may also be presented, depending on the source of funding.

Where skills development is concerned, ULB has set up several soft skills doctoral training programmes (scientific communication in English, intellectual property rights, knowledge and technology transfer, didactics...). The university plans to organise other trainings to broaden these programmes, at interuniversity level, in the years to come, as a follow-on from the PRODOC project (please refer to point 3).

When their status so permits, doctoral candidates can undertake certain teaching activities, including supervision of Master's theses dissertations. These tasks are not always formally recognised,

however. There is a need to establish a procedure at Faculty level that would make it possible to validate these tasks in a CV, in particular the co-supervision of Master's theses dissertation. Assistants, who spend 50% of their time on pedagogical support activities, can sometimes benefit during their final year from a reduction in workload so that they can concentrate more fully on writing their PhD thesis. The situation varies, however, from one faculty to another.

Like doctoral candidates, **post-docs** are considered integral members of their research team. They carry out their research under a supervisor but without any formal monitoring, apart from a potential mid-mandate assessment and/or a final project report. Post-docs are often encouraged to do some teaching, within the limits authorised by their position, and/or to supervise Master's research or theses. Again however, as with doctoral candidates, they do not receive official recognition for the work they do as supervising dissertations or theses. Their working conditions are not formally defined in a charter as they are for doctoral candidates.

Teaching activities should particularly be validated for **"senior researchers"**, who often make a major contribution to the teaching of specialised courses, including the co-supervision of PhD theses.

The responsibilities of the academic staff cover the ULB's three missions (teaching, research and services to society). Moreover, **academics** can do some extra paid work (up to 20%) in addition to teaching/research activity, by declaring this to ULB. They can also ask for sabbatical leave, providing they are replaced, using either internal or external financing.

Where research proper is concerned, the Research department has developed various information channels on available funding opportunities (see above) and provides logistical support for submission of applications. Furthermore, ULB offers researchers the necessary equipment and environment, through internal and external funding options.

A special welcome day is organised for new academic staff but they do not systematically benefit from practical benefits such as a reduction in the teaching hours during the first years of office, or from the systematic provision of an installation allowance. Moreover, they do not receive specific training on research (funding, etc.) or supervision of research and human resource management.

At present, academics are not systematically evaluated at regular intervals. Their dossiers are assessed when they get a permanent lectureship or when they apply for promotion or funding.

Finally, it would probably be a good idea for a backup software be made available free of charge to the whole research community at the University. Laboratory notebooks are generally used in laboratories where their use is justified but the University should make researchers aware of their importance and offer them a software (electronic laboratory notebooks).

Action Plan

The diagnostic assessment above enabled us to identify the following areas for improvement.

On the legal level:

ULB cannot take any decision that goes against the legislation but can however attempt to improve the existing legislation:

27. Negotiations with political authorities with a view to legally setting holidays/leave (and the conditions for replacement during holidays/leave) and flexible organisation of working hours for academics;
28. Negotiations with political authorities with a view to adapting the status of post-docs on a fellowship to enable them to take on some teaching activities.

Commitments between Researcher- supervisor- institution:

29. Drawing up of a *Post-doctoral Charter*;
30. Improve the visibility of prevention and appeal procedures.

Development or expansion of training programmes:

31. Programmes for doctoral candidates: languages and scientific communication, drafting of projects, intellectual property, etc.;
32. Programmes for post-docs or "senior researchers": languages and scientific communication, drafting of projects, searching for funding, technology and knowledge transfer, intellectual property, etc.;
33. Training programmes in human resource management and project management for academic staff, in particular for heads of departments, supervisors and newly appointed staff: human resources, staff career, gender equality, funding seeking, contract management, project management, knowledge and technology transfer, intellectual property, etc.

Teaching:

34. Drawing up of a policy concerning teaching tasks assigned to doctoral candidates and post-docs;
35. Official recognition of teaching and supervision, in particular and depending on the case, of co-supervision of dissertations or theses by doctoral candidates, post-docs and "senior researchers";
36. Partial release from teaching for newly appointed academics.

Research funding:

37. Introduction of an installation allowance for newly recruited academics;
38. Measures to facilitate access to operational costs for certain categories of doctoral candidates.

Evaluation:

39. Reflexion on the periodic presentation of individual progress reports by academics.

Data security:

40. Reflexion on the provision of free tools for computer back up by the Computing centre;
41. Increase awareness on the use of laboratory workbooks and reflection on the provision of electronic workbooks by the Computing centre.

Flexibility:

42. Circulate information about the possibility for doctoral candidates and post-docs to undertake paid activities outside the university, within the limits of the present legislation;
43. Survey all staff to ascertain whether it is necessary to increase the number of places and extend opening times at the crèche.

6. *Internationalisation @ home*

Diagnostic Assessment

While the University encourages its researchers to develop international collaborations and to spend time in laboratories abroad, it also welcomes many international doctoral candidates, post-docs and confirmed researchers: 43% of doctoral candidates; 37% of researchers and 14% of academics are of foreign nationality.

In order to facilitate their arrival in Belgium, the University has set up a very efficient EURAXESS Services centre ("International Welcome Desk"), to assist international researchers with their administrative procedures (visas, residence cards, medical insurance, etc.), and with installation requirements (housing, medical services, nurseries, schools, etc.).

The University has also developed a specific website and PhD application form in English.[4] The site in English is nevertheless not quite as complete as the French version. In addition, some documents containing regulations and general information, such as the *Guide for New Staff*, the *Code for ethical conduct and integrity in research, for knowledge and technology transfer, and the creation of spin-offs,* or the regulations regarding intellectual property are not yet available in English. Finally, there is no English version, for information purposes, of contracts or other documents pertaining to employment.

Most administrative departments in contact with researchers have taken on bilingual staff to ensure that international researchers can be helped and informed in English. Efforts should be made in those departments where this is not yet the case via staff language training. Informal conversation classes are currently organised once a week, for members of staff, and English lessons are provided for the PATGS but limited to ten hours.

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[4] There also exists a short online presentation of ULB in 18 different languages.

Finally, research activities, within most research centres at ULB, can be conducted exclusively in English; the PhD thesis may also be submitted and defended in English.

Action Plan

The diagnostic assessment above enabled us to identify the following areas for improvement.

Communication:

44. Expanded online website in English, particularly where information on staff careers is concerned;
45. Translation into English and online version of main documents including general information and regulations, particularly at the level of the Human Resources Department;
46. Publicising of the services of the International Welcome Desk among researchers.

Language Programmes

47. Improved information on the availability of French as a foreign language lessons for international researchers;
48. Review of the organisation of French as a foreign language lessons for all international researchers;
49. English lessons for administrative staff (at least one member of staff per unit).

7. Implementation of actions and time-frame

The table below indicates, for each action, the name of the administrative department or body in charge of preparing the dossier (''Preparation of dossier''), the ratifying body, if relevant (''decision-making body''), and the time-frame for the implementation[5] of each action.

Actions involving "reflection" are carried out by the body concerned or by a working group specifically appointed by the body in question, whose mission is to provide recommendations on the subject.

Depending on the theme, dossiers are prepared in collaboration with the Faculties and/or trade unions and the Works Council. To make the table easier to read, this information is not systematically included.

And finally, all points discussed by the Research Council or the Teaching Committee are put on the agenda of the Board. To facilitate reading of the table, the Board is only indicated when the action point has not been previously addressed elsewhere.

N°	Action	Preparation of dossier (*)	Decision-making body (**)	Start	End
Missions of the University and governance					
1	Make researchers more aware, as soon as they are hired, of the institutional strategic objectives (special welcome day for new researchers)	R		2013	2013
2	Post on university's website the *European Charter for Researchers* and the *Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers*, and information about this to newly hired researchers	DRH		2013	2013
3	A better organisation and dissemination of information about rules, regulations and best practice regarding knowledge and technology transfer (protection of intellectual property, patents, spin-offs, etc.), via a single handbook	DR	RC; TC	2013	2014
4	Proposals for an improved gender balance within the decision-making bodies	AdGP		2013	2016
5	Systematic development and publication of statistics on gender at all levels of research activity	AdGP; BE	B	2013	2014
6	Creation of a directory of research on gender issues undertaken at the University, and an increase in the visibility given to this	AdGP		2013	2014
7	Evaluation and perpetuation of the institutional procedure for five-year evaluation of research	DR	RC	2013	2014
8	Implementation of a new tool for the presentation of research, including research units and platforms	DR; DRE	RC	2013	2014

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[5] The dates correspond to the starting and finishing points for the organisation of the measure in question, not its actual implementation. As an example, action 4 should be up and ready in 2016, once the proposals for a better gender balance will have been formulated. The application and implementation will go beyond 2016.

9	Assessment of experience and possible revision of the *Code for ethical conduct and integrity in research, for knowledge and technology transfer, and the creation of spin-offs*	CEIR	B	2013	2013
Recruitment					
10	Implementation of the decision to publish job vacancies and research grants on the EURAXESS Jobs portal	DR; DRH; F; Gr	RC	2013	2013
11	Creation of a guide for applicants, including those applicants seeking promotion, giving legal information (salary scales, rules regarding seniority and qualifications…) and full details of criteria and selection procedures	DRH; DR	RC; TC	2013	2016
12	Setting up of training programmes for personnel regarding gender neutrality during recruitment	AdGP; DRH; F		2013	2016
13	New on-line version of the institutional CV, to be made more complete and usable, and covering the three main missions and mobility	DR	RC	2013	2013
14	Reflexion on whether it would be appropriate to standardise letters of motivation and also interviews for candidates retained following the initial screening	R	RC; TC	2013	2015
15	Definition of a coherent policy on letters of reference	R	RC; TC	2013	2015
16	Reflexion on standardising the recruitment of assistants by a Faculty recruitment committee	R	RC; TC	2013	2013
17	Definition of a university policy regarding responses to non-selected candidates	R	RC; TC	2013	2015
Status of research staff and career development					
18	Negotiations with political authorities with a view to improving the professional status of "senior researchers"	R; P; DRH		2013	2016
19	Negotiations with political authorities with a view to achieving recognition of the PhD degree for members of the PATGS, when a PhD is required for the position	R; P; DRH		2013	2016
20	Registration of all "visiting" and "guest" researchers and professors	DRE; DRH; F		2013	2014
21	A limit to the number of half-time assistantships, in favour of full-time positions	R	RC; TC	2013	2014
22	Support in preparation of their future career for doctoral candidates and post-docs, with the setting up of specific coaching for both categories	DRH; DR	RC	2013	2015
23	Statistical analysis of the careers of "senior researchers" and senior technical staff on outside funding, and evaluation of the support offered to these senior staff when they become unemployed	R; P; DRH; CGPFE; BE	B	2013	2015
24	Reflection on the end of career for "senior researchers"	R; P; DRH; CGPFE	B	2013	2015

25	After 15 years of work under contract, or when a "senior researcher" reaches the age of 45, a mandatory regular meeting with the head of the department , the Dean, the Human Resources Department of and the Financial Administration Department to review the researcher's career, his/her present contract and future professional prospects	R; P; DRH; CGPFE	B		2013	2015
26	Provision of specific tools for "senior researchers" to help them reorient their career outside the university	R; P; DRH; CGPFE	B		2013	2015
Working conditions						
27	Negotiations with political authorities with a view to legally setting holidays/leave (and the conditions for replacement during holidays/leave) and flexible organisation of working hours for academics	R; P; DRH			2013	2016
28	Negotiations with political authorities with a view to adapting the status of post-docs on a fellowship to enable them to take on some teaching activities	R; P; DRH			2013	2016
29	Drawing up of a *Post-doctoral Charter*	DR	RC		2013	2014
30	Improve the visibility of prevention and appeal procedures	Gr; DRE			2013	2013
31	Training programmes for doctoral candidates	DR	RC		2013	2015
32	Training programmes for post-docs or "senior researchers"	DR	RC		2014	2016
33	Training programmes in human resource management and project management for academic staff, in particular for heads of departments, supervisors and newly appointed staff	DRH	B		2013	2016
34	Drawing up of a policy concerning teaching tasks assigned to doctoral candidates and post-docs	R; F	TC		2013	2015
35	Official recognition of teaching and supervision, in particular and depending on the case, of co-supervision of dissertations or theses by doctoral candidates, post-docs and "senior researchers"	R; F	RC; TC		2013	2015
36	Partial release from teaching for newly appointed academics	R; F	TC		2013	2014
37	Introduction of an installation allowance for newly recruited academics	R	RC		2013	2015
38	Measures to facilitate access to operational costs for certain categories of doctoral candidates	R; F			2013	2015
39	Reflexion on the periodic presentation of individual progress reports by academics	R	RC		2014	2016
40	Reflexion on the provision of free tools for computer back up by the Computing centre	CC	RC		2013	2016
41	Increase awareness on the use of laboratory workbooks and reflection on the provision of electronic workbooks by the Computing centre	DR; CC	RC		2013	2016
42	Circulate information about the possibility for doctoral candidates and post-docs to undertake paid activities outside the university, within the limits of the present legislation	DRH			2013	2014
43	Survey all staff to ascertain whether it is necessary to increase the number of places and extend opening times at the crèche	DSCU			2014	2015

	Internationalisation @ home				
44	Expanded online website in English, particularly where information on staff careers is concerned	DRE; DRH		2013	2014
45	Translation into English and online version of main documents including general information and regulations, particularly at the level of the Human Resources Department	DRE		2013	2014
46	Publicising of the services of the International Welcome Desk among researchers	DRE		2013	2013
47	Improved information on the availability of French as a foreign language lessons for international researchers	DRE; CIDLV		2013	2013
48	Review of the organisation of French as a foreign language lessons for all international researchers	R; CIDLV		2013	2015
49	English lessons for administrative staff (at least one member of staff per unit)	DRH	B	2013	2015

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AdGP	Advisor on Gender policy
BE	Advisory Bureau
CC	Computing Centre
CEIR	Committee for Ethics and Integrity in Research
CGPFE	Management committee for staff on outside funding
CIDLV	Interfaculty centre for the teaching of modern languages
DR	Research Administration Office
DRE	External Relations Department
DRH	Human Resources Department
DSCU	Department for services to the university community
F	Faculties
Gr	Registry
P	President
R	Rector

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B	Board
RC	Research Council
TC	Teaching Committee