

HR Strategy for Researchers.

Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Approved by the Executive Board
24 June 2022

HOGENT

1. Ethical and professional aspects

Actions on the ethical and professional aspects of research were an important part of the HRS4R of HOGENT University of Applied Sciences and Arts. HOGENT made significant progress in this area in the past period. The topics covered included research with a societal impact, the quality framework for applied research and ethical aspects of research at HOGENT.

HOGENT went one step further in realising societal impact through research. All applied research at HOGENT is now clustered in interdisciplinary research centres which aim to make a sustainable contribution to societal challenges (Action 1, Action 4). The research agenda of the centres is based on the Sustainable Development Goals and the centres work in co-creation with their stakeholders, including students, industry and citizens (Action 5). In this framework, scientific freedom and independence are never compromised. HOGENT remains committed to guaranteeing the quality of research. Thus, the framework for monitoring research quality, both at the level of research projects and at the level of research centres (rather than the former departments) was optimised and will be further implemented in the future (Action 13). In addition, HOGENT, together with all other Flemish universities of applied science, embarked on a process to determine indicators for monitoring and evaluating the impact achieved by applied research, aiming to increase this impact (Action 5, Action 13).

Various actions were undertaken to stimulate the research-teaching nexus. The research centres have further elaborated their strategy for realising the nexus in the covenants with the Executive Board of HOGENT. Continued attention is paid to this by, among others, the working group set up through cooperation between the Education Office and the Research Affairs Office (Action 2).

As provided for in the Strategic Plan 2017-2022, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts & Royal Conservatory of HOGENT (KASK & Conservatory) is working on reformulating its mission, vision and strategic objectives for research in the arts, in which the relationship with society will once again play a key role. In the future, research clusters and/or research networks or the like will also be deployed (ACTION 25). The research culture interacts with the societal field and the broader arts world, and researchers participate in international networks and research projects, exchanging and sharing knowledge through symposiums, festivals and publications. Opportunities for the dissemination of specific outputs will be explored in the next period (ACTION 26).

Scientific integrity and the resulting ethical principles were also widely discussed. Thus, the Scientific Integrity Committee was established at HOGENT (Action 11) and various initiatives ensured that researchers were well informed about ethical principles (Action 10). A policy on data security was drawn up and several measures were taken to support researchers in their data management, including the creation of a Centre for Applied Data Science (Action 9). In the next period, data management in research will be further addressed in the elaboration of the Open Science policy at HOGENT (see below).

Nevertheless, there are permanent and new points of attention. A deontological code for the staff at HOGENT had not yet been drawn up. The reorganisation was delayed; the implementation of a new organisational structure was in itself a complex matter that was further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, priority was given to measures to support the welfare of staff and students, among others. In the upcoming period, work will continue on the drafting of the deontological code in consultation with the sustainability coordinator, among others (extension Action 7). HOGENT will also need to continually engage in decision-making, and provide training and information on ethical issues. For applications addressed to the Medical Ethics Committee, the first actions have been taken to achieve more structured operations. This will be optimised in the next period (ACTION 27). In addition, HOGENT will work on the development of a 'Research Policy on Child Protection'. Children are particularly vulnerable, so we must ensure that their welfare is always safeguarded when they are involved in research (ACTION 28). Moreover, as a result of the various reorganisations, the research regulations of HOGENT have become outdated and need to be updated (ACTION 29). The copyright policy will be integrated into these regulations (extension Action 8).

The dissemination of results must also be further strengthened, particularly in the context of Open Science. The Flemish Open Science Policy was established in late 2020 and must be applied by all research institutions in Flanders, including the universities of applied sciences and arts. HOGENT will gear its own Open Science policy to this. For the achievement of the proposed KPIs, namely ORCID, data management plans, FAIR data, Open Access (extension Action 3) and Open Data, HOGENT is following the schedule set by the Flemish government. The development of the Digital Open Science Platform (DOSP) to replace the Current Research Information System of HOGENT was delayed and will be implemented from the autumn of 2022 onwards. The schedules for the implementation of DOSP and for the roll-out of the Open Science policy will run in parallel (extension of Action 3, ACTION 30, ACTION 31).

Actions HRS4R 2022-2025 Ethical and professional aspects

- Action 3 extended
Within the Current Research Information System requiring full-text disclosure of HOGENT publications under Open Access.
- Action 7 extended
Establishing and implementing a deontological code for the staff of HOGENT and raising awareness about this.
- Action 8 extended
Developing a procedure with respect to copyrights created by researchers in the framework of their mandate and its implementation.
- ACTION 25: Define the mission, vision and strategic objectives for research in the arts
- ACTION 26: Further dissemination of the research culture of KASK & Conservatory in society and the art world
- ACTION 27: A structured approach to applications addressed to the Medical Ethics Committee incorporating data management
- ACTION 28: Developing a Research Policy on Child Protection
- ACTION 29: Updating of the research regulations with integration of the copyright policy
- ACTION 31: Implementation of the Digital Open Science Platform at HOGENT

2. Recruitment and selection

In 2021, HOGENT started updating various HR areas, including recruitment and selection. To this end, HOGENT first established the principles of an appreciative staff policy in early June 2021. An appreciative staff policy was already part of the vision for the culture shift and reorganisation of HOGENT, but had not yet been put into practice. By defining the seven principles (motivating for managers and staff, sustainable, transparent, clear and simple, fair, legally correct but also pragmatic, for everyone, from everyone), the term 'appreciative staff policy' acquired a concrete meaning. The principles of an appreciative staff policy form the basis for the elaboration and definition of a number of new HR-related projects within HOGENT. These do not only concern recruitment and selection. Some of them are also discussed in the section 'Working conditions and social security'.

The recruitment and selection procedures of HOGENT date back to 2015. After the implementation of the reorganisation, they need to be revised - they must be clarified and simplified, and enable

continuity. The staff context within Flemish higher education is complex. As a result, there is a need for clear regulations on recruitment and selection for well-defined target groups. That is why - contrary to the previous regulations on recruitment and selection - separate regulations have been elaborated for the three staff categories within HOGENT (statutory teaching staff, administrative staff and contractual researchers). Researchers fall under two of these categories. On the one hand, there are members of the teaching staff who have been appointed with an educational mandate and allocated research time as part of their role. On the other hand, there are temporary contractual researchers who have been recruited to carry out research projects. As a result, two regulations apply to researchers: one for statutory teaching staff and one for contractual researchers. The regulations should clearly describe the different steps and stages in the recruitment and selection of staff, thus ensuring a more uniform application of the rules. An OTM-R policy has not yet been fully developed as such, but HOGENT conducts recruitment and selection in an open and transparent manner and in the evaluation it takes into account accumulated expertise in the field, the private sector, possibly experience gained abroad and expertise in teaching. For researchers in the arts, the selection of candidates takes into account, among others, the art portfolio and research practice within their own art discipline.

These principles have already been applied in the new regulations for statutory teaching staff, which were approved at the end of June 2021, and which therefore also apply to those with a research assignment. In the drafting of the new selection regulations for contractual researchers, HOGENT will rely on its own principles of an appreciative staff policy on the one hand and on the other hand on the provisions in the Code of Conduct and the principles of OTM-R (ACTION 32). The selection regulations will be drafted through a participation process in collaboration with the Human Resources Office, Research Affairs, and a delegation from the departments, the research centres and KASK & Conservatory. The drawing up of clear job descriptions, roles and competence profiles supports the drafting of vacancy profiles and the selection process of candidates (see ACTION 38 under Working conditions and social security). HOGENT will provide information and training sessions on the new regulations for the recruitment and selection of contract researchers (ACTION 32).

Since April 2020 vacancies have been published via the e-tool CV Warehouse. Fellowships for researchers in the arts are published in English and featured on the online platforms Art & Education and Callforcurators. So far, no vacancies have yet been published on EURAXESS. In the next period, an action plan will be developed to implement this at HOGENT (extension of Action 22 with reformulation of indicators/targets and ACTION 32).

HOGENT is aware of the lack of actions that focus on the recruitment of specific target groups (e.g. disadvantaged groups) and - with the exception of the recruitment at KASK & Conservatory - the limited international focus of recruitment. This will be addressed in the HOGENT-wide diversity policy to be developed (see ACTION 34 under Working conditions and social security).

Actions HRS4R 2022-2025 Recruitment and selection

- Action 22 extended with amend objectives/indicators
Promotion of international recruitment by translating vacancies for relevant research positions and publishing them in English on both the website and international websites.
- ACTION 32: Implementing new regulations for the recruitment and selection of contractual researchers in line with the principles of an appreciative staff policy and the OTM-R guidelines.

3. Working conditions and social security

To date, the HRS4R has mainly focused on the support of researchers in project administration, diversity and non-discrimination and the working environment in the context of health and safety. The

procedural manual for the administration of research projects has been finalised and updated in line with the new structure of the research centres (Action 14). The same applies to administrative support for the provision of services and the submission and implementation of external research projects (Action 14, Action 15). In the framework of efficient processes and user-friendly systems, it has emerged that an update of the staff management system is necessary. This includes a link to the Digital Open Science Platform that is to be implemented, which in the future will also allow for administrative project monitoring and follow-up (ACTION 33, ACTION 31). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the teleworking policy was expanded and adapted time and again based on the government regulations. Specific attention was paid to the situation of researchers who, for example, had to carry out external field or laboratory work (Action 24). Research projects were regularly evaluated during this period and, where necessary, work plans and objectives were adjusted.

Several information sessions were organised on diversity and non-discrimination, and initiatives were set up to further implement the vision on diversity and inclusion within HOGENT (Action 16). As a result, the Diversity and Inclusion working group was set up in early 2022, which will develop a HOGENT-wide diversity policy under the mandate of the sustainability coordinator. All aspects of gender equality will be included (ACTION 34).

The International Office offers support for and management of incoming and outgoing mobility. As provided for in the Interim Assessment, two tools have been implemented to simplify the professional mobility request process on the one hand, and to administratively monitor incoming and outgoing mobility on the other hand. Furthermore, an internationalisation policy plan was approved within HOGENT (Action 18). The implementation of the action is considered to be completed. However, the use of the two tools (for professional mobility and Mobility Online) revealed that the digital approach to staff mobility needs to be reconsidered. The internationalisation policy plan approved in 2020 also requires further operationalisation of the approach to staff mobility (ACTION 35).

Through employment at HOGENT, a number of provisions of the Charter automatically apply to all researchers. Indeed, HOGENT is bound by a number of legal and decree provisions for the employment of staff, including researchers. Staff and researchers at HOGENT are remunerated according to salary scales linked to the position. For contractual researchers, these pay scales are the same as those for teaching staff. Seniority (built up elsewhere) is taken into account. Matters such as pension savings, sick leave and leave entitlements are also the same for researchers as for other similar categories of staff.

A number of matters concerning the employment of researchers at HOGENT could still be further improved. Since October 2021, applied research has been organised in the research centres. The advantage of this approach is that researchers are grouped around a common societal theme. However, despite the grouping of researchers in research centres that receive annual operating funds to finance their research activities, the research is still mainly realised on a project - and thus temporary - basis. As a result, the contractual researchers working on such projects have less job security. HOGENT wants to address this by elaborating a vision on sustainable employment for contractual researchers in the regulations for the recruitment and selection of contractual researchers (ACTION 36 as a follow-up of Action 23). The Human Resources Office also wishes to investigate the possibility of aiming for an equivalent pension for contractual researchers (ACTION 37).

Another more practical issue to be addressed is the creation of workspaces for researchers. In order to meet the future vision of the research centres and cooperate in a multidisciplinary way, the research centres should have a suitable common workspace on campus. Based on a needs analysis, HOGENT will take appropriate actions to realise this (ACTION 38).

The appreciative staff policy approved in 2021 (see section Recruitment and Selection) forms the basis for a new HR policy at HOGENT that is in line with the organisational values and culture (Action 6). The principles of the appreciative staff policy will be addressed in objectives to be worked out, such as the drafting of clear job descriptions and the drawing up of new evaluation regulations (ACTION 39, ACTION 40). Other matters that require attention, also for researchers at HOGENT, are the policy on traineeships in the professional field, reintegration after long-term sick leave and the implementation of an end-of-career policy (ACTION 41, ACTION 42, ACTION 43).

Actions HRS4R 2022-2025 Working conditions and social security

- ACTION 33: Implementation of a new staff information system in order to correctly manage various HR processes and related data in an efficient and user-friendly manner
- ACTION 34: Development of a HOGENT-wide diversity policy by the Diversity and Inclusion working group which includes gender equality
- ACTION 35: Develop and implement tools to support outgoing and incoming mobility for all staff at HOGENT (teaching staff, researchers and administrative staff) in line with the internationalisation policy plan
- ACTION 36: Draw up a vision paper on sustainable employment for contractual researchers on the basis of an indefinite employment contract with the aim of valorising expertise and creating greater job security
- ACTION 37: Investigate a possible second pension pillar for contractual researchers in order to strive for an equal pension for all employees
- ACTION 38: Multidisciplinary cooperation in suitable workspaces
- ACTION 39: Establishment of clear job descriptions and profiles with specific focus on the competencies and responsibilities of researchers
- ACTION 40: Draw up new evaluation regulations in line with the principles of the appreciative staff policy for HOGENT staff with due attention to the evaluation of responsibilities, tasks and competences connected with research
- ACTION 41: Implement a policy on traineeships in the professional field for staff at HOGENT in order to stimulate staff development and knowledge sharing in the context of lifelong learning and to maximise sustainable employment, in line with the principles of the appreciative staff policy
- ACTION 42: Implement a reintegration policy for staff returning after long-term sick leave, according to the principles of the appreciative staff policy
- ACTION 43: Implement an end-of-career policy as part of a life-phase-aware and appreciative staff policy, focusing on job satisfaction, knowledge assurance and practical preparation for departure

4. Training and development

The principles of the appreciative staff policy at HOGENT (see section Recruitment and selection) support the professionalisation of staff and offer a career policy framework.

In the field of professionalisation for researchers, several initiatives were added in the past period. The Research Affairs Office became a member of the HOGENT-wide professionalisation network; internal training courses are offered via a central page on the intranet of HOGENT (Action 20). In addition to this internal professionalisation offer, researchers can follow training courses within the 'INPUT/OUTPUT Research & Innovation Training Programme' of the Flemish Council of Universities of Applied Sciences. Within this programme, training courses, workshops and inspiration sessions are organised for researchers from universities of applied sciences to support their applied research and

its valorisation. Researchers from universities of applied sciences can give input for topics that are dealt with in the training programme (Action 21). A training programme integrating the gender dimension in research will be given particular attention. From 2022 onwards this will be an award criterion within EU Horizon projects and at the moment there is not enough knowledge about this. Training initiatives centred around this are preferably organised in cooperation with the Input/Output Research & Innovation training programme (ACTION 44).

The principles of the appreciative staff policy adopted in mid-June 2021 also address leadership: the HR policy supports the managers in their task and in the organisation of their course, service or team. Attention is paid to knowledge sharing, knowledge enhancement and professionalisation in the field of HR, both for managers and employees. Managers are given maximum responsibility as well as trust and growth opportunities. A research centre is led by a coordinator. For this purpose, the regulations for the mandates of the coordinators of the research centres were established in the first half of 2020. Coordinators are the functional managers of staff members who take on research assignments within the centre. They advise on evaluations concerning the research assignment and are responsible for a number of HR-related matters as laid down in the 'Powers of HOGENT entities'. To support these coordinators, a leadership training process was launched in December 2021. A specific blended learning path was developed with live training alternated with digital learning interventions and buddy coaching. Other HOGENT-wide training initiatives for managers are also open to the coordinators of the research centres (Action 12).

In a next phase of the implementation of the new organisational structure and the organisation of research in new entities, attention will be paid to the role, responsibilities and needs of researchers. Special attention will be paid to the clarification of the role of the project coordinator, e.g. how does it relate to the coordinator of a research centre, which responsibilities do project coordinators or PhD supervisors take on, etc. (ACTION 45).

Actions HRS4R 2022-2025 Training and development

- ACTION 44: Integrate the gender dimension into the content of research
- ACTION 45: Define the role, responsibilities and needs of researchers.