HRS4R 2024 Report

Interim internal evaluation

Nantes Université

Table of contents

1. Organisational information

The data below concerns Nantes Université's scope as an employer.

STAFF AND STUDENTS	FTE 2022
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD students either full-time or part-time involved in research	1 658
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	200
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)	-
Of whom are women	658
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.	1 279
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level	84*
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level	354**
Total number of students (if relevant)	35 657
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)	4 024
RESEARCH FUNDING IN €	**2022**
Total annual organisational budget	€370 517 528
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	€79 777 336
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	€28 718 441
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	€1 010 448
ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (in brief)	
Nantes Université, established in January 2022, has 43,000 students and 5,700 employees distributed across several member institutions. These institutions focus their strengths to work on areas of excellence for research in Nantes. Overarching objectives include envisioning and developing healthcare and industry of the future through I-SITE NExT and providing students with new training and learning opportunities in all areas of knowledge. Nantes Université employs 4 500 members of staff directly and is committed to improving both the learning environment for its students and the working conditions and environment for its staff.	

*Including temporary lecturer-researchers (ATER contracts) with a PhD or HDR accreditation to supervise theses

**Including temporary lecturer-researchers (ATER contracts) with a contract at Nantes Université who do not have a PhD or HDR accreditation to supervise theses

2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Instructions: Please review the strengths and weaknesses under the four thematic areas of the Charter and Code, as provided by your organisation in the initial assessment phase. When doing so, you should do not only look back, but also consider new priorities, strategic decisions, etc. which may further influence the action plan. Please also provide a brief commentary in the "Remarks" column if major changes have occurred versus the initial plan.

Pillar 1 – Ethical and professional aspects

The scientific integrity adviser and the ethics adviser provide the academic community with information and advice, to promote best practice in these areas. The committee for ethics, professional conduct and scientific integrity (CEDIS - Comité d'Ethique, de Déontologie et d'Intégrité Scientifique) was established at the beginning of the 2023-2024 academic year. It succeeds the committee for non-interventional research (CERNI). CEDIS strengthens the support on matters such as respect for the regulations and individuals, data protection, and ethics methodology which Nantes Université staff can access when developing projects.

Policy on data protection is structured to observe the national regulations (General Regulation on Data Protection - RGPD). To this end, a data protection officer (DPO) has been appointed, a register of processing operations has been set up (notably in the field of healthcare) and tailored support is available to lecturer-researchers.

The University has continued with its action to promote gender equality and counter discrimination, which it began in 2021 by adopting a gender equality plan and consolidating the listening and reporting service for sexual and gender-based violence (81 cases reported in 2022). The dedicated webpage has been translated into English to enable everyone, including foreign staff and doctoral researchers to access the information. To strengthen action further, a legal affairs manager was appointed in 2023, to deal specifically with situations flagged by the listening service.

In terms of good practice on knowledge sharing, open science has become a major policy focus. The local project called "Ouverture", which was the successful candidate in the national call for projects "ExcellencES", demonstrate this commitment, as well as the adoption of an open science action plan in May 2023, which is based on the national framework agreed under the National Open Science Plan (PNSO2).

General and specific training on all these matters (scientific integrity, open science, scientific and technical culture) is available to the academic community (lecturer-researchers, postdoctoral researchers, PhD students, administrative and research staff).

Nevertheless, in the process of implementing ethical and professional principles, some weaknesses and areas in need of improvement have been identified:

- The University's policy on disability needs to be redefined, as the last plan only covered the 2017-2019 period. A new inclusion plan is expected to be ready in June 2024 and an overall strategy to counter all forms of discrimination was introduced at the start of the autumn term 2023 to consolidate existing policies in this area.

- One of the challenges in open science is to embed this concept as a fundamental principle in the day-to-day work of lecturer-researchers. This requires time to adapt and changes to assessment criteria so that open science becomes a regular part of working practices.
- Information dissemination, training and awareness of best practice in scientific integrity, data protection and open science all require improvement, especially in view of the institution's size.
- Women are still underrepresented in recruitment to some disciplinary fields.

Pillar 2 – Recruitment and selection

One of the institution's key achievements around recruitment and selection has been to develop a charter on open and transparent recruitment practices which recognise and value career paths and competencies (OTM-R). Drawing on all current existing policies and framework documents, such as the management guidelines on promotion and mobility, this charter provides a general framework and comprehensive view of recruitment and selection procedures for research and administrative staff and covers several groups (lecturer-researchers, postdoctoral researchers, PhD students, administrative and research staff). In line with its strategic policy document, Nantes Université as an experimental public institution has laid down recruitment principles common to its various member institutions.

Recruiters and members of selection panels and committees have access to several support tools. The guide for selection committees lists various resources which can assist with recruitment (formation of committees, template evaluation grids for assessing applications, etc.). In 2023, the University began to use a software package called Between to handle the multi-posting of job vacancies and manage applications. This tool ensures that candidates are kept informed more effectively about the recruitment process (at this stage, it is only being used to recruit temporary non-teaching (BIATSS) employees).

Members of recruitment panels and selection committees are offered training, which provides an opportunity to highlight certain essential principles, such as gender balances on panels, non-discrimination and recognition of career paths when evaluating applications. Recruiters can also access training on professional equality, diversity and non-discrimination.

Publishing English translations of job descriptions for lecturers and professors and the work of the Bureau des Talents are helping to increase the institution's international appeal as an employer.

Some processes or points still require improvement:
- At present, there is no management charter for fixed term lecturer-researchers (around 800 employees at Nantes Université in 2022), unlike the document in place for non-teaching (BIATSS) staff on fixed term contracts. A dedicated management charter is currently being produced and should be published sometime in 2024.
- Arrangements for recruiting and advertising postdoctoral vacancies need to be clarified to ensure consistency in procedures. A tutorial on how to enter details of a vacancy on EURAXESS is currently underway.
- The management guidelines need to be disseminated more effectively.
- Communications in English on the University's and laboratories' websites are inadequate. A member of staff has been appointed for 2024 to handle this matter, which will increase the volume of content published in English.
- Courses offered to recruiters have a relatively low uptake rate.

- Opportunities for international mobility and the career benefits such placements can bring lecturer-researchers are not communicated widely enough.

Pillar 3 – Working conditions

In addition to introducing policies to counter discrimination, the University is taking action to prevent risks at work and to improve working conditions, as the implementation of an annual prevention programme demonstrates. A social barometer exercise, targeting all members of staff, is conducted every two years to identify challenges regarding working conditions and the working environment as well as areas for improvement. The latest barometer exercise was launched in October 2023 and the results are expected for the 1st semester of 2024. The option to work remotely, which was initiated in 2018, has been facilitated since the COVID pandemic due to renewal of the remote working charter, and by providing employees with the necessary equipment and introducing a paperless procedure for remote working requests. In 2022, 1063 employees had a remote working agreement, compared with 255 in 2019.

The management charter for non-teaching (BIATSS) staff on fixed term contracts is reviewed regularly, supplementing the national regulatory framework for permanent employees. Various measures have been adopted to enhance conditions for permanent and temporary BIATSS staff (the remuneration grid has been updated and salaries increased for temporary BIATSS staff, and the benefits scheme for permanent BIATSS employees has been enhanced).

A number of schemes, resources and/or training courses are available to staff to support them in their career development:
- PhD students are offered specialist training in preparing for the professional world and career planning.
- Presentations on current career development schemes for lecturer-researchers (e.g., research leave – congé pour recherche et conversion thématique - CRCT) are held regularly. Joint research units have a designated adviser on professional equality who is tasked with supporting researchers, women in particular, in developing their careers.
- There is an internal mobility scheme for BIATSS staff to support the development of professional pathways and encourage the acquisition of new skills.
- All employees can access tailored support from a career mobility adviser.

The intranet is used, as necessary, to promote schemes and initiatives such as the temporary internal promotion for university professors.

However, several weaknesses have been identified:
- The phenomenon of early career researchers on successive short-term contracts is still a reality.
- Peer support for early career researchers at the University is not adequately structured. Difficulties have been noted in identifying voluntary mentors to support new researchers.
- Some recruitments are unsuccessful, due primarily to salaries which are deemed too low.
- Our social report notes that women are underrepresented at professorial level (women account for 22% of University Professor roles compared to 44% of lecturer roles). Differences in pay and promotion have also been observed.
- The range of administrative procedures remains cumbersome and complex and reduces the time available for research.

- The career mobility adviser is receiving a high number of requests and cannot necessarily respond positively within reasonable timescales.

Comments: Several initiatives are in progress to improve and consolidate the institution's actions on working conditions:

- A mentoring charter is envisaged from the autumn term 2024 onwards, to support new lecturers.
- A management charter for fixed term lecturer-researchers is being developed to clarify administrative processes and provide this employee group with secure career paths.
- Dedicated positions are being created to support the four colleges (Humanities, Health science, Science and Technology, Societies) and laboratories with developing research projects, operational implementation of these projects, and securing funding, under our contracts of objectives, means and performance with the Ministry for Higher Education.
- HR procedures are going paperless and being simplified to make them more straightforward and efficient for service users.

Pillar 4 – Training and development

Nantes Université oversees 10 doctoral schools which host more than 900 PhD students. Each doctoral school offers training on a set of topics relevant to their disciplinary field (training, research, working methods, careers).

Work has been undertaken to make the training offer for lecturer-researchers, administrative staff, researchers and PhD students clearer. As an outcome, two new tools have been rolled out (AMETHIS for PhD students, GEFORP for staff) to increase the visibility of available training and facilitate registration processes. Newsletters with reminders about current training opportunities on offer are shared regularly with the community. With the objective of continuous improvement, at the end of each course, participants are asked to evaluate the training.

The training catalogue is extensive and offers everyone an opportunity to develop professionally in a range of areas throughout their careers (English, management, IT tools, risk prevention, professional skills, quality of working life, ecological transition, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, etc.).

Specific training is available on supervising doctoral students and the supervisor's role to support PhD supervisors.

Under its *experimental institution* status, Nantes Université has opened most of its training courses to employees at other member institutions (Centrale Nantes, CHU de Nantes, INSERM, École des Beaux-Arts, École d'Architecture, IRT Jules Verne). As a member of the EuniWell European alliance, Nantes Université also draws on the expertise of other European member institutions so that it can expand its course catalogue to include courses provided (in English) at each of these establishments.

Some aspects of training and professional development still require improvement:

- Some courses face a low attendance which raises the matter of adapting courses to the needs and availability of employees.
- Courses offered by the institution are only open to PhD students with teaching responsibilities who have a contract with the University, other PhD students only have access to courses offered by the doctoral schools.
- Promoting and communicating details of training opportunities needs to be improved to ensure that this information is distributed more effectively.

7

Additional questions

Have any of the priorities for the short and medium term changed?

With the creation of the new Nantes Université institution on 1 January 2022, new directions and priorities were set in the strategic policy document for 2022-2026 (Appendix 1). The institution's governance structure comprises four main colleges, two independent institutions (INSPE, OSUNA) and six members (Centrale Nantes, École des Beaux-Arts de Nantes Saint-Nazaire, École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Nantes, CHU de Nantes, IRT Jules Verne, INSERM) (Appendix 2).

The HRS4R initiative affects the establishment's activities on various levels, particularly in the areas of HR and research. It should be emphasised that Nantes Université's HRS4R initiative concerns its remit as an employer only. However, the various member institutions are working together to identify joint action which could be implemented across the University's overall remit. The human resources conference during the academic year 2023-2024 will help to structure the Nantes Université's HR strategy.

Within this new policy framework, various new and consolidated lines of action will strengthen the establishment's HRS4R activities directly. These include:
- Facilitating mobility for research staff, by developing professional mobility opportunities between Nantes Université's member institutions for all employee categories, including lecturer-researchers.
- To support staff with developing their skills, by forming and strengthening teams focusing on instructional design for employees.
- To fight against all types of discrimination and promote equality and diversity by establishing a dedicated body to implement strategy on disability, gender equality in the workplace and countering discrimination, for teaching, administrative and research staff, postdoctoral researchers and PhD students.
- To make knowledge accessible to everyone by applying the principles of open science, based on the strategic lines in the second national plan for open science (PNSO2). In this capacity, at a meeting of the governing board on 7 July 2023, Nantes Université presented its action plan on open science (Appendix 3) with details of how it will implement the national plan locally and operationally.
- To free up more time for research by simplifying administrative procedures and strengthening and enhancing research support services. Specific support and mentoring for early career researchers have been consolidated.

Have any of the circumstances in which your organization operates changed and as such have had an impact on your HR strategy?

Some organisational and situational developments are affecting the institution's HR strategy:
- International and European context: Nantes Université is a member of the EuniWell European alliance, a group of 11 European universities which are working together on the theme of well-being in the spheres of education, research, innovation and everyday living. The institution is responsible for implementing an initiative on "promoting the development of the academic employer of the future". This initiative's focus includes improving HR practices in relation to recruitment and working conditions (including implementation

of HRS4R at partner institutions), staff training opportunities and exploring shared principles towards a recognition and reward system.

- <u>National context</u>: the law of 6 April 2019 on transformation of the civil service modifies various provisions which directly affect HR strategy and policy. These include: overhauling social dialogue bodies, making recruitment procedures more flexible, especially for employees on fixed term contracts, an obligation to introduce a plan for gender equality in the workplace, and new arrangements for mobility and career transitions. Additionally, the law on research programming for 2021-2030 which was approved in 2020 has implications for HR strategy. These include: implementation of an internal promotion channel for lecturer-researchers and researchers (25 promotions granted at Nantes Université since 2021), introduction of a benefits scheme for lecturer-researchers, creation of a legal status for postdoctoral contracts.

- <u>Local context</u>:
  o Nantes Université was established on 1 January 2022 as an experimental public institution and encompasses the four colleges, constituent institutions, associated institutions and a research institution. Three members currently have HRS4R accreditation in addition to Nantes Université in its capacity as an employer (INSERM, CHU de Nantes, Centrale Nantes). They are currently working to align their action plans and define joint action points and shared principles.

  o The creation of this new institution builds on the NExT initiative and I-SITE label of excellence which was awarded to Nantes Université in 2017 and confirmed in 2022. The purpose of this project is to develop a pioneering pathway in research, training and technology transfer, by consolidating two key areas of research: healthcare and industry of the future, which will have a knock-on effect on pure sciences and the humanities and social sciences.

  o Since autumn 2022, HR activities have gradually been decentralised towards the four main colleges (Humanities, Health science, Science and Technology, Societies). The challenge is to align decision-making with action, so that the process of implementing action points is more straightforward and efficient. This therefore affects HR strategy which is now set and applied at different levels. To ensure that the move to decentralisation runs smoothly and efficiently from an operational perspective, and that HR policy is implemented fairly, it is essential that procedures are developed and formalised and that training is put in place for managers. The institution has an internal evaluation system to notice and support implementation of the Nantes Université project in the long-term, having established an Office for institutional transformation.

Are any strategic decisions under way that may influence the action plan?

Several decisions or projects underway could have an impact on our action plan. The most significant include:
- The governing board's adoption of the Nantes Université open science action plan on 7 July 2023.
- Potential developments in the HRS4R initiative at Nantes Université in conjunction with member institutions. To this end, accredited institutions (Nantes Université, CHU de Nantes, Centrale Nantes, INSERM) have been organising initial discussion sessions since the beginning of 2023.
- The "Ouverture" project, which was the successful candidate in the 2023 ExcellencES call for projects, could involve action in various spheres (staff training, HR, research, scientific and technical culture).
- The institution's membership of CoARA (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment), which could have implications for appraisal systems for lecturer-researchers and researchers, collaborative practices and partnerships with non-scientific stakeholders.
- The introduction of contracts of objectives, means and performance (COMP) with the Ministry for Higher Education, which will stabilise resources for specific areas, in conjunction with public policies introduced by the government (professionalization of training, student well-being and success, ecological transition, boosting research and innovation).

3. Actions

Revised action plan for 2024-2027

The revised action plan and details of new action points is available on the institution's webpage.

OTM-R policy

The institution's OTM-R charter is available on the institution's webpage.

Comments on the implementation of OTM-R principles

The recently developed OTM-R policy demonstrates the institution's commitment to improving its recruitment procedures for all employees, and employees working in research in particular (PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, lecturer-researchers, administrative and research staff). This document sets out our general framework for recruitment and lists specific documents which provide more extensive details. Our work on developing our recruitment policy has highlighted the extent and diversity of existing procedures and schemes and given us an opportunity to structure and enhance work which has already been completed or started.

Nantes Université, along with its constituent institutions (Centrale Nantes, CHU de Nantes, INSERM) has built its HR strategy around common, underlying principles, as stated in the strategic policy document (Appendix 1):
- Action to promote professional equality and parity and to counter discrimination.
- Development of a policy on disability.
- Development and implementation of recruitment charters.
- Support for employees in developing their skills and competencies.

These points were discussed and shared by a working group, comprising human resources managers from every Nantes Université's institutions, in September 2023.

Job vacancies are advertised and can be consulted on several websites. Postdoctoral research contracts and lecturer-researcher positions are also published on EURAXESS. Discussions are currently underway about automatically publishing PhD opportunities advertised on doctoral contracts platforms (TEBL) on EURAXESS. At the same time, the institution is taking steps to improve the information provided in each advertisement (working environment, conditions of employment, selection procedures, etc.), including on EURAXESS. Dedicated procedures and tutorials are available to support teams tasked with advertising job vacancies.

Reflecting its commitment to transparency in recruitment processes, the institution has acquired new software to handle multi-posting of job vacancies and manage applications. This software is initially used to recruit administrative staff but after a trial phase, it could be rolled out to support the recruitment of lecturer-researchers. The tool automatically notifies candidates at each stage in the recruitment process and is playing a major role in making our recruitment and selection process more transparent.

Training offered to recruiters and members of selection committees emphasises the importance of recognising candidates' career paths when evaluating their applications. The objective is to gradually embed this principle across the institution. Some action remains to be taken in this sphere, primarily in relation to recognising public/private career paths.

To promote the principles of openness, transparency and recognition, this constantly-evolving document will be updated and presented to our governing bodies whenever necessary.

4. Implementation

General overview of the expected overall implementation process of the action plan

After submitting its application for accreditation, and ahead of obtaining accreditation in March 2022, the institution took organisational measures to prepare for implementation of its HRS4R action plan.

The steering committee was overhauled to take account of its change of scope (transition from an accreditation committee to a monitoring committee). The objective is to ensure that, as much as possible, this body reflects the diverse nature of our research community and plurality of our disciplinary fields.

The composition of the implementation committee has also been extended to include subjects which are an important focus for our institution (e.g., open science, the EuniWell European alliance).

Difficulties in involving PhD students (R1) in these types of body have been identified. To address this, the institution is taking measures aimed specifically at employees in this group (action points 1, 2, 3.2 , 22, 27) so that they gradually become more involved in the initiative. A consultation directed at early career researchers (including PhD students), to take place in 2024, is also being considered.

The implementation committee meets on average four times a year. Its composition and tasks are presented later.

The steering committee meets at least once each year. In view of the work required for this internal evaluation, it met three times in 2023 (in March, September and November).

Specific resources (shared workspace, tracking table and action sheets) have been made available to members of the steering committee and implementation committee. They are essential for ensuring that the implementation process is run in a way which guarantees transparency and that information on progress with action points is shared. These resources are listed and available online in the dedicated section on HRS4R on University's website.

Progress is shared with the whole community through an annual report which is promoted via an HR newsletter. This report includes a review and details of key achievements, based on work undertaken by managerial departments (Appendix 4). The report for 2022-2023 is available on the University's website (in French and in English). Important information is communicated via newsletter as necessary (details of targeted action, progress reports, etc.).

Several restricting factors have had an impact on implementation of HRS4R since accreditation was granted:
- The creation of Nantes Université on 1 January 2022, involving the establishment of bodies with extended remits (disbanding of the research committee and the university council for international partnerships, transfer of competences to the Nantes Université academic council).
- Research staff and the academic community have received multiple requests.
- Several member institutions of Nantes Université obtaining HR Excellence in Research accreditation (CHU– 2021, Centrale Nantes - 2021, INSERM - 2016 and renewed in 2023).
- The HRS4R project manager's absence in 2022 for maternity leave.

2022 was therefore marked by the gradual establishment of the new institution. The whole academic community was heavily involved in this process and work on HRS4R had to progress at the same pace.

Moreover, the institution wanted to fully incorporate HRS4R in its internal procedures and activities. As an outcome, instead of organising events dedicated solely to the HRS4R initiative, the research community was involved in and consulted about specific, directly related topics. The aim of this approach was twofold:

- To capitalise on the institution's existing strengths and streamline the how requests to lecturer-researchers and researchers are handled.
- To clarify communication and contextualise the HRS4R initiative, and its objectives and benefits, operationally.

This approach enabled us to target our research staff directly and then roll out the initiative gradually within the institution.

In relation to this approach, several events were organised in 2022 and 2023:

- An annual seminar for PhD students.
- A training day for equality advisers at joint research units.
- A welcome day for employees, with stands for new lecturer researchers and for PhD students.
- The social barometer on employment conditions and the working environment, which is sent to all Nantes Université employees, including research staff, was updated in October 2023. Focus was placed on assessing psychosocial risks and gender-based violence.

An HRS4R working group was formed in 2023, bringing together HRS4R project managers from different member institutions (CHU, Centrale Nantes, INSERM). As well as discussing and sharing best practice and the state of progress at each institution, this group is working together to define a common set of action points which can be implemented by all institutions as part of their HRS4R initiatives. In 2023, work began to identify common principles in relation to recruitment at different institutions, covering gender equality, non-discrimination, international appeal and increasing employees' skills and competencies.

Checklist on key issues in the implementation process

How have you prepared the interim review?

Work on preparing the interim evaluation began in June 2023 and involved five broad stages:
- The project team identified initial written documentation required, based on progress with the HRS4R action plan (June to September 2023).
- A list of suggestions for additions, amendments and deletions was drawn up by the implementation committee, in the first instance, and subsequently by the steering committee (September 2023).
- Members of the steering committee and the implementation committee reviewed and approved the report before it was presented to various governance bodies (October to November 2023).
- The report was presented to different governance bodies to obtain their opinions and approval (governing board, academic council, council for social matters, conferences of laboratory directors, the general meeting of administrative services) – (December 2023).
- The report was translated into English (January-February 2024).

The different bodies involved (steering committee and implementation committee) received regular updates about the internal evaluation and deadlines for communication on retro planning the initiative, the state of progress with the action plan, the content of the internal evaluation report, and the OTM-R charter.

To put forward a revised version of the action plan, specific working sessions were organised between the HRS4R project team and parties responsible for operational implementation of action points.

In view of the density and complexity of the initial action plan (28 action points and 55 sub-action points) and the organisational and structural context (creation of a new institution, the project manager's absence, low availability of staff due to multiple requests), the institution has made the decision to focus on consolidating actions it has already initiated. The desired goal is to maximise the likelihood of a successful and effective outcome for action begun. This will have several advantages:
- Demonstrable success and progress are more likely to guarantee and secure a long-term commitment to HRS4R within teams and the community.
- Focusing on achievable goals, without embarking on too many projects, will encourage involvement in the project and increase the sense of collective success which is essential to embedding this initiative in the long term. Five new action points have therefore been added to the original plan.

In parallel, a list of current activities under the HRS4R initiative has been drawn up, to recognise work already initiated and completed.

The dedicated webpage for our HRS4R initiative is updated regularly, to share information on the state of progress and upcoming deadlines with the entire academic community. Particular care is taken to make information accessible to international lecturer-researchers, postdoctoral researchers and PhD students (with pages and documents translated into English).

How have you involved the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?

Since receiving accreditation, the composition of the steering committee has been reviewed to ensure that all categories of research staff (R1 to R4) are represented. Because it is comprised primarily of research staff (researchers from R1 to R4 and administrative staff), the steering committee therefore provides a way to involve the community of researchers and to ensure that information about the initiative is shared with this community. To share procedures and develop joint action across the establishment, member institutions of Nantes Université (CHU of Nantes, Centrale Nantes, INSERM) also sit on the committee alongside the managerial departments concerned.

Additionally, research staff also play an active role within specialist committees and working groups which are a full part of the HRS4R initiative. For example:

- The gender equality steering group
- The equality and diversity steering group
- The disability inclusion plan steering group

These committees provide a forum for discussion and exchange where researchers can draw attention to their needs and any challenges they have observed on the ground.

In line with the University's implementation strategy for HRS4R, there are also a number of themed initiatives which involve the research community. For example:

- To support career development: the seminar for PhD students at the beginning of each academic year
- Working conditions: training for advisers on gender equality, welcome day for new members of staff
- Recruitment: training for members of selection committees recruiting lecturer-researchers

An annual report on HRS4R and its key achievements is published for the extended academic community. The newsletter format is designed to reach a broader audience and gives researchers an opportunity to interact with and help develop this initiative. The community can access the report on the University's website (Appendix 4).

The University is committed to creating an environment which is more collaborative, participative and conducive to active democracy throughout the institution. For example, the work of the *mission démocratie universitaire* (democracy task force) fosters the engagement of researchers on essential topics at the institution (consultation on the law on research planning; consultation on implementation of the Nantes Université project).

Do you have an implementation committee and/or steering group regularly overseeing progress?

HRS4R strategy at Nantes Université is led by the Vice President, who is responsible for social responsibility matters, with the support of the HRS4R project manager, who is responsible for the operational aspects.

Two bodies oversee implementation of the HRS4R initiative:

- The steering committee, which is responsible for strategic management and comprises 23 members. Since receiving accreditation, the composition of this committee has been reviewed to ensure that, as far as is possible, it represents the full spectrum of research staff working at the institution. Its composition will be reviewed whenever necessary to guarantee that it remains representative of the community. The steering committee therefore comprises members of the management team (Vice President Research and Open Science, Vice President Europe and International, Vice President PhD Matters), the scientific integrity adviser, representatives from each category of researchers and lecturer-researchers (R1 – PhD students*, R2 – postdoctoral researchers, R3 – early career lecturer-researchers, R4 – established lecturer-researchers), representatives from research laboratories, representatives from managerial departments (Human Resources and Labour Relations; Research, Partnerships and Innovation; Europe and International). The directors of the four colleges and HRS4R project managers from member institutions (CHU of Nantes, Centrale Nantes, INSERM) also sit on the steering committee.

  The steering committee is consulted at least once each year; more if the timetable requires it or if there are issues in need of resolution or negotiation. In 2023, the steering committee was consulted three times (in March, September and November) ahead of presenting the internal evaluation report to the governing bodies for Nantes Université.

- The implementation committee, which is responsible for operational rollout of the project, comprises 14 members, primarily staff from the managerial departments responsible for implementing action points (Human Resources and Labour Relations; Research, Partnerships and Innovation; Welfare Development, Risk Prevention and Safety; Europe and International; Documentation; Communication; Management Control, Evaluation and Quality Support Service; the EUniWell team).

  This committee is led by the HRS4R project manager and meets approximately four times per year (once every three months). Its discussions cover timescales, actions in progress or which have not been executed, new developments at institutional, national or European level, difficulties observed, technical, organisational and timetable constraints, and methodology (list not exhaustive). The implementation committee is also an open forum for discussion, and thus establishes a link between all departments working on HRS4R. This is essential to ensure that the initiative is implemented successfully throughout the institution.

Preparatory materials are sent out ahead of meeting proceedings. All members of the committee receive an agenda and minutes. Members of the implementation and steering committees can access all working documents, minutes and resources.

At this point in time, no PhD students sit on the steering committee. Eventually, the full spectrum of researcher and lecturer-researcher profiles should be represented on the steering committee.

Is there any alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? For example, is the HRS4R recognized in the organisation's research strategy, overarching HR policy

The Nantes Université strategic policy document, which was approved by the governing board on 15 December 2022, sets out the institution's overall strategic direction for 2022-2026 (Appendix 1). It refers to the HRS4R initiative and develops the institution's key policy directions for human resources and research.

Regarding human resources, HR policy is developed to comply with the national framework (management guidelines for example) and the European framework for HRS4R. In practical terms, this involves drawing up an OTM-R charter which outlines recruitment procedures for research staff. Transparent practices and clear communication about timescales, procedures and recruitment cycles have been embedded fully within the Human Resources and Social Dialogue Department. The Nantes Université human resources conference during the academic year 2023-2024 will provide an opportunity to discuss and share information on various HR matters across the institution. To this end, in September 2023, a working group, representing all human resources departments and member institutions of Nantes Université, held discussions on recruitment and training in the context of HRS4R.

Regarding research, various policy directions fully reflect those set out in HRS4R. For example, mentoring and support for PhD students have been identified expressly as a priority. Moreover, a dedicated action point on this has been added to the revised HRS4R action plan (Action 28 – redefine admission policy for PhD students and make selection procedures clearer). More broadly, the institution is implementing action to free up more dedicated research time (Action 25.1 of the HRS4R action plan + Action 32). Nantes Université has engaged fully in open science initiatives. Its commitment can be seen in its open science action plan, which was presented to the governing board on 7 July 2023, and refers to HRS4R in the context of training in open science.

Nantes Université has also joined the EuniWell European alliance for well-being and is working in conjunction with 11 partner European institutions to develop a dedicated HR initiative: Academic Employer of the Future. This initiative mentions HRS4R as a tool for improving practices around recruitment and working conditions at EuniWell's member institutions. Nantes Université, as the body leading implementation of the initiative, has begun sharing best practice and HRS4R resources with other institutions.

How has your organisation ensured that the proposed actions would be also implemented?

The initiative is coordinated by the project manager. To ensure that action points are executed effectively across the institution, there are various aspects to the coordination process:

- Managerial departments recommend action, to address gaps which the academic community has identified in relation to the principles of the Charter and Code. This ensures that action points are realistic, that there is a clearly identified contact person for each action, that account is taken of the workload for the departments involved and that all actions are feasible operationally. It is important to point out that the HRS4R initiative is implemented using existing budgets and resources – there is no additional funding.
- Specific monitoring tools, such as tracking tables, action sheets and shared workspaces, have been developed for HRS4R, with input from designated contacts for action points to ensure that these tools are user-friendly.
- Project methodology: implementation committees hold regular meetings with designated contacts for action points (every three months approximately) to discuss retro-planning, priorities, methodology, difficulties and any needs in relation to negotiation or dispute resolution; designated contacts also have regular opportunities to meet with the HRS4R project manager, to facilitate close monitoring of action. Members of the implementation committee are asked to flag any challenges they observe in relation to the technical or operational feasibility of action points, so that further discussion and negotiation can take place, if necessary.
- The action plan is reviewed annually (at least), to update progress made and different indicators or deliverables (including action points completed), thus ensuring that action remains permanent and effective in the long-term.
- Action points recommended when the action plan is reviewed must be as realistic as possible, i.e. technically and operationally feasible, time-bound, and measurable. This helps to ensure that the initiative is rolled out smoothly and that short- and medium-term objectives are achieved. It also helps foster a sense of collective success.

More generally, active listening, recognising challenges, and regular and transparent communication with all members have encouraged teams to get involved and invest in the HRS4R initiative, which is becoming a cornerstone of our institution.

How are you monitoring progress (timeline)?

The implementation committee maintains and regularly updates the tracking table which includes all the information on action points the institution is working on – objectives, timescales, indicators, deliverables, person responsible for actions. Each action point is allocated a status (not started, in progress, completed, extended). Members of the steering committee can consult these documents.

Before each meeting (implementation committee and steering committee), a progress report is issued in the form of performance indicators, placing particular focus on those actions with the nearest deadlines or with deadlines which could be difficult to meet.

Regarding ongoing monitoring, designated contacts for action points have defined indicators and deliverables which help to demonstrate progress. At each meeting of the implementation committee, the importance of measuring progress, either qualitatively or quantitatively, is emphasised. Indicators and deliverables are essential for evaluating the impact and effect of action implemented under HRS4R. Once per year, the implementation committee is expected

to update the progress status of each action point, including for action already completed. Most actions completed are ongoing and require regular updating and performance monitoring to ensure that they continue to be effective (e.g. updating a framework document, creating a new training course, etc.).

The Nantes Université action plan is not fixed and can be developed or amended. As an outcome, some action points may be reviewed to take account of technical and operational feasibility (indicators, timescales) and any organisational or structural developments.

How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment?

A new consultation will be launched with the research community (an overall consultation and targeted consultations for different groups) to assess progress with the initiative's key pillars (ethical and professional aspects, recruitment and selection, working conditions, training and development). This will provide us with a new roadmap and indicate areas for improvement which could possibly be added to the revised action plan for 2027-2030.

By way of illustration, we are currently considering holding a consultation with PhD students (R1) and postdoctoral researchers (R2). This will focus on arrangements for hosting these categories of researcher in the laboratory, preventing risks at work, and training and knowledge of the institutional environment.

Indicators and/or deliverables were set for each sub-action point during the initial phase. The designated contact for each action is responsible for producing indicators and/or deliverables within their scope. The HRS4R project manager is responsible for ensuring that this information is widely available. To this end, a shared online workspace has been created for submitting and sharing deliverables.

During this internal evaluation phase (2022-2024), indicators have been adjusted in response to their relevance and technical feasibility. This is because there have been problems achieving some indicators due to technical constraints with tools and resources.

To ensure that indicators are achievable and available over time, the designated contact for each action recommends accessible and measurable indicators within their scope of activity. It has also been pointed out that the success of actions should not be measured solely from a quantitative perspective and that other evaluation criteria should be used as well. Progress on some action points is measured in the form of published deliverables (framework documents, guides and support documents, internal and external webpages, etc.).

How do you expect to prepare for the external review?

We will refer to the European Commission's recommendations on inspections from the Commission's experts.
We shall pay particular attention to the following:

- Developing a three-year retro-plan to identify the main risks and to plan in tasks for completion in the short and medium terms.
- Meeting deadlines and transferring deliverables expected by the European Commission within the required timescale, in advance of the inspection.
- Communicating the agenda and arrangements for the inspection to members of the institution concerned, for information purposes and to ensure that this inspection is widely known about and swiftly included in diaries and schedules (particularly for the management team). The steering committee will propose and negotiate an agenda before contacting the European Commission.
- There will be an initial collective meeting to prepare for the inspection. This will involve the management team, the steering committee, the implementation committee and representatives from each employee population from R1 to R4. The meeting will take place in the third quarter of 2026.
- Producing a summary covering expectations, challenges and organisational arrangements for the inspection. This will be available to all members concerned and published on the intranet.
- Communicating with and offering targeted support to stakeholders who will be interviewed by inspectors (by creating a dedicated communication plan, identifying needs in relation to translation and organising specific work sessions in specific fields of expertise).
- Operational preparations for the inspection: logistics, administrative matters, communications.

We will ensure that every member interviewed has an opportunity to ask questions and express concerns well in advance of meetings, so that we can provide answers and help everyone make the most of these interviews.

We would like to emphasise the confidential nature of these discussions and the ethos of continuing improvement surrounding the inspection. First and foremost, this process is about discussing our practices and taking advantage of external expertise in order to improve and consolidate them. In the long term, transparency and honesty about the current situation and prospects can only be beneficial for us.

We see the inspection as an opportunity to show examples of aspects highlighted in the final review, focusing on key and strategic actions for our institution. Note that we will be organising a discussion session about the new Nantes Université institution, involving member institutions, as part of a meeting with the inspectors.

Regarding methodology, we will work with departments with experience of organising this type of event, to share best practice and identify risks (e.g. internal review and inspections in 2020 held by an independent national organisation called HCERES). Additionally, we will organise a session where member institutions of Nantes Université which have already undergone inspection can share their experiences and best practice (inspection for INSERM in May 2023).

Appendices for assessors

Appendix 1 – [Nantes Université strategic policy document](#) (in French)

Appendix 2 – [Nantes Université statutes](#) (in French)

Appendix 3 – [Nantes Université open science action plan](#) (in French)

Appendix 4 – [HRS4R report 2022-2023](#)

Appendix 5 - Glossary

Glossary

- **I-SITE NExT**: I-SITEs for Initiatives for Science, Innovation, Territories and Economy universities. This national certification label recognises universities which value thematic scientific assets that make them a driving force for their development and partnership strategy.

- **NExT** for Nantes Excellence Trajectory is the I-SITE project for Nantes Université. This is an excellence project based on two major areas: the health of the future and the industry of the future, with a knock-on effect on all disciplines and a strong involvement of the human and social sciences.

- **ATER** for *Attaché Temporaire d'Enseignement et de Recherche*, corresponding to teaching fellows. They can prepare a thesis or take competitive entrance exams in higher education while teaching on a contract basis. In all cases, it is required from them to take part in the various tasks involved in their teaching activity: supervising students, assessing knowledge and exams.

- **HDR** for *Habilitation à Diriger les Recherches*. It is a French post-doctoral degree allowing its holder to supervise PhD students.

- **PNSO2** for *2e Plan National pour la Science Ouverte*. This is the second phase in the roll-out of the national framework for open science.

- **Non-teaching (BIATSS) employees:** BIATSS is a French acronym for *Bibliothécaires, ingénieurs, administratifs, techniques, personnels sociaux et de santé*. It corresponds with non-teaching staff in the public higher education sector.

- **CRCT** for *Congé pour Recherche ou Conversion Thématique*. It is a leave for research or thematic conversion for researchers. It could be linked to research or a new line of research, to carry out a specific project (writing a book, organizing a major conference, etc.), or to resume an activity linked to teaching-research duties.

- **AMETHIS:** this is a portal for PhD students to access theses, trainings and administrative services.

- **GEFORP:** this is a training offers platform for staff of Nantes Université, accessible with an institutional e-mail address.

- **Centrale Nantes:** engineering school, member of Nantes Université since 2022.

- **CHU de Nantes:** university teaching hospital of Nantes, member of Nantes Université since 2022.

- **Ecole des Beaux-Arts**: art school, member of Nantes Université since 2022.

- **Ecole d'Architecture:** architecture school, member of Nantes Université since 2022.

- **IRT Jules Verne** for *Institut de Recherche Technologique*. It is an industrial and collaborative research center for manufacturing, member of Nantes Université since 2022.

- **INSPE** for *Institut National Supérieur du Professorat et de l'Education.* It is a component of Nantes Université which is involved in trainings for students to become teachers in primary school and secondary school.

- **OSUNA** for *Observatoire des Sciences de l'Univers Nantes Atlantique*. It is a component of Nantes Université, conducting research in field of the sciences of the universe.

- **TEBL** for *Thèses en Bretagne-Loire* is a local platform for disseminating doctoral research projects of doctoral schools.

- **HCERES** for *Haut Conseil de l'Evaluation de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur*. It is a national organisation in charge of evaluation of higher education institutions.

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https://www.univ-nantes.fr/universite/vision-strategie-et-grands-projets/the-university-embarks-on-the-process-of-obtaining-the-hrs4r-label-human-resources-strategy-for-researchers