

Human Resource Strategy for Researchers action plan

Starting point

In 2009 the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW) became a signatory¹ to the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers². To bring itself into line with the principles contained in the charter and optimise the environment for the further advancement of international activities in the research and development arena, the School of Teacher Education FHNW is joining other Swiss and European higher education institutions (HEIs) and participating in the EU's Human Resources Strategy for Researchers initiative. This programme facilitates the observance of the principles and, once they have successfully completed the process, awards HEIs the "HR excellence in research" badge.

The research and development identity of the School of Teacher Education FHNW

The School of Teacher Education is one of Switzerland's leading HEIs driving the professionalisation of tertiary teaching careers. In furtherance of this objective, it has established a differentiated research culture that fosters research-oriented education across all the main professionalisation areas; moreover, it promotes participation in an international disciplinary discourse and makes an important contribution to such discourse. Through a programme of systematic clustering, the School is consolidating its position in the realm of research and development.

Relationship to the HR strategy of the School of Teacher Education FHNW

"The School of Teacher Education FHNW aligns its HR strategy firmly with its overall strategic objectives. The HR strategy considers what staff are needed to achieve the School's strategic objectives. This issue revolves around how the 'faculty as a whole' should develop in respect of its competencies, distribution of HR categories, proportion of full-time and part-time posts and proportion of permanent and temporary staff, but also in respect of age and gender distribution, nationalities, etc., in order to achieve the institution's objectives. The School must also examine which staffing changes, in particular through the recruitment of new staff, and which, in particular through the advancement or training of existing staff, it could and should be aiming for. Key conditions in this respect are the HR categories defined within the FHNW or the related reference roles." (Extract from *Handbuch Personalmanagement PH FHNW v4*, p.4)

Procedure

The School of Teacher Education decided early in 2011 to participate in implementing the principles of the Charter and Code of Conduct through the EU's Human Resources Strategy for Researchers initiative. The School was looking to achieve "HR excellence in research" status in a bid to underscore the importance of research and thus boost the status of researchers at the School of Teacher Education FHNW.

In an initial step, the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers programme envisages a gap analysis. It supplies a template setting out the 40 principles of the Charter and Code of Conduct. This template helps point up which of the principles are already being implemented at the School and which need further work.

A second step involves the formulation of an action plan which, based on this analysis, incorporates developmental steps and remedial activities destined to be implemented over the next three years. This process is published online so that anyone inside or outside the organisation can follow it. The EU Commission bases its decision on whether to award the School of Teacher Education the "HR excellence in research" badge on this online exercise.

If given the go-ahead, the School has two years in which to implement its developmental steps and carry out a self-assessment. This is followed by an external audit including a peer review as well as site visits. This step determines whether the School may continue to bear the badge.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/charterAndCode#U>

² http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/brochure_rights/eur_21620_de-en.pdf

Objectives and remedial activities (action plan)

Aspects assessed in the audit as being insufficiently advanced or lacking are formulated as objectives in this section alongside the remedial activities required to achieve them. This section also identifies the competences relating to implementing the activities and those relating to monitoring them. A schedule sets out the dates for implementing the activities.

1) Ethical and professional aspects

Research activities in the institutes of the School of Teacher Education were given a considerable boost by the introduction of the professorship model in 2009. The professors in the institutes are tasked with promoting active engagement in research and development.

Despite the spread of research activities within the School, there is nothing in its constitution that sets out the rights and responsibilities of those conducting that research. A School-wide code of practice is to be rolled out: setting out ethical and quality standards in the research process, it will apply to the researchers as well as to the institutional framework. The principles set out in the code of practice form the basis of every academic activity; compliance with the code will protect those being researched and help maintain the trustworthiness of the researchers, the quality of the research and the credibility of the institution.

To ensure maximum acceptance of the contents of the code of practice, a consultation process has been launched involving the management teams of the institutes, the professors, the product divisions and research centres, and the co-determination commission. This ensures that the entire academic faculty of the School of Teacher Education has a voice in the discussion.

Because the School's administration is according the introduction of a code of practice a high priority, the consultation process is already under way, having begun on 1 October 2011. The code is set to come into force in June 2012.

Objective	Remedial activity	Competence ³	Schedule
		Monitoring ⁴	
The code of practice defines the ethical guidelines and quality criteria relating to the research process and communicates them; the code is binding on the entire faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion/adoption of the School of Teacher Education FHNW code of practice in relation to ethics and quality in the research process (consultation) - Step-by-step implementation of the principles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School administration - School administration/Extended Management Board - Line managers 	2nd quarter of 2012

³ The 'competence' column identifies who is responsible for implementing the activity/ies.

⁴ The 'monitoring' column identifies who is responsible for ensuring compliance with the activity/ies.

2) Transparency in the recruitment process

The application and selection processes should be set out in a schedule alongside specific durations. This is designed to standardise and streamline the recruitment process. In addition, applicants selected for interviews should be given access to the selection criteria. This is designed to demonstrate the School's commitment to transparency in respect of its requirements and expectations. The person in charge of the selection process should, if asked to, reveal the grounds for a rejection at the end of the process.

Depending on the post being advertised, the selection tools should be broadened to include not only interviews, but also other tasks. This is designed to subject the applicants to a range of scenarios: the various abilities and skills thus revealed should generate a more comprehensive picture of the individuals involved. In addition, subjecting applicants to a range of selection methods should help them give a good account of themselves across a variety of situations. Applicants selected for an interview must be informed of the selection tools being considered for that role.

Objective	Remedial activity	Competence	Schedule
		Monitoring	
Boosting the transparency of the recruitment process within the School of Teacher Education FHNW and externally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a template schedule showing application deadlines and selection procedures for a variety of application processes - International job advertisements for a variety of appointments - Establishing in-house job advertisements for lecturing appointments - Applicants will be informed in advance of the selection criteria; readiness to give feedback regarding grounds for rejection - Broadening of recruitment methodology repertoire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Director/Head of HR - Head of HR 	3rd quarter of 2013

3) Equal opportunity-friendly working conditions

The working conditions should allow staff – including those with a disability – to balance their working life and career with family responsibilities. The School of Teacher Education has already conducted gender equality projects to raise awareness amongst the staff. There is still room for improvement in respect of the recruitment of people with special needs and people with disabilities. Here, work is being undertaken in connection with the *Barrierefreie Hochschule* (barrier-free university) initiative aimed at promoting accessibility for all university students.

Job-sharing models can prove useful for a variety of reasons: staff, for instance, may prefer to work part-time, or the workload of a particular role may exceed 100%. Also, the allocation of tasks and responsibilities can differ. Two members of staff, for instance, may share the same duties or divide them up between them. The School of Teacher Education currently lacks universally applicable specifications capable of setting parameters for job-sharing models. Developing such specifications could lead to the emergence of more job-sharing opportunities by facilitating this form of working and engendering trust in the system.

Objective	Remedial activity	Competence	Schedule
		Monitoring	
Equal opportunity-friendly working conditions have been achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Barrierefreie Hochschule</i> project (see above – access to universities for people with disabilities) - Define specifications for job-sharing opportunities for the faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equal opportunities representative - Equal opportunities representative - School administration - School administration - Head of HR - Line managers 	2nd quarter of 2014

4) Career development (continuous professional development)

The staff development regulations, which apply to all employees and which informs the School of Teacher Education's own policies, sets out training and continuous professional development criteria; the School is generous in its provision of such benefits, believing as it does in the importance of a well-qualified and motivated workforce.

There is a lack of documents dealing explicitly with the career development of the academic faculty. That is why, as a first step, career development activities targeting this category of staff should be integrated into the mid-level faculty concept currently under development. In doing so, the School of Teacher Education FHNW is signalling its readiness to foster the advancement of the next generation of academics. The focus is on the mid-level faculty, the reason being that, unlike the lecturers, this category does not benefit from specific allowances for training and university development/administration.

Objective	Remedial activity	Competence	Schedule
		Monitoring	
The School of Teacher Education FHNW places a high value on the career development of researchers	- Integration of career development activities within the mid-level faculty concept	- Director/School administration - Head of HR - Line managers	3rd quarter of 2014
Fostering the relationship between experienced and next-generation researchers; leveraging the knowledge and know-how available in the institution	- Supplement in the appendix to the mid-level faculty concept with opportunities to embark in research and development (similar to embarking on a career in teaching)	- Head of HR - Line managers	3rd quarter of 2014
	- Regular programme of research colloquia	- Institutes	4th quarter of 2012
	- Further development of the research methodologies programme; broadening of the Institute for Educational Research and Development core programme	- Institutes	4th quarter of 2013

5) Mobility

The School of Teacher Education fully recognises the value of the mobility of its staff. These mobility activities should now be further supported and expanded by making the School's mobility advice provision responsible for the interests of the academic faculty as well, and by facilitating access to information about the mobility programme for all interested parties.

Acknowledgement of mobility experience should also be stated as a desirable criterion in job advertisements. This elaboration underscores the importance of the aspect of mobility to the School of Teacher Education FHNW.

Objective	Remedial activity	Competence	Schedule
		Monitoring	
The School of Teacher Education FHNW actively encourages researchers' involvement in mobility programmes and makes its acknowledgement of mobility experience transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structure and management of supportive and advisory programmes in the area of mobility for the School's academic faculty - Information on mobility programmes to become generally accessible 	- School administration/mobility representative	1st quarter of 2013
		- Mobility representative	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobility experience is stated as a desirable criterion in job advertisements 	- Line managers	2nd quarter of 2012
		- Head of HR	
		- Head of HR	
		- Line managers	