

## 1887Internal Review

Case number: 2020ES576693

Name Organisation under review: Universitat Rovira i Virgili

Organisation's contact details: c/ de l'Escorxador, s/n, Tarragona, Tarragona, 43003

### 1. Organisational Information

<b>STAFF &amp; STUDENTS</b>	<b>FTE (Full Time Equivalent)</b>
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research	984
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	192
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation) *	197
Of whom are women *	464
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor. *	571
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level *	153
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level *	260
Total number of students (if relevant) * (Source: URV en xifres intranet)	11.780 (Undergraduate, 2020-21) 1.836 (Master, 2020-21) 1.277 (PhD, 2019-20)
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff) * (Source: URV en xifres web URV data 2019-20)	1.166 (teaching and research staff) 721 (management and admin. staff)
<b>RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)</b>	<b>€</b>
Total annual organisational budget *(Source: URV en xifres web URV data 2019-20)	109.200.000€
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research) (2020 URV Budget for Research and Innovation)	10.899.858€
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding) (2020 Research and Innovation Report)	14.500.000€
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research (2020 Research and Innovation Report)	7.100.000€

### ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)

Located approximately 100 km south-west from Barcelona, on the Mediterranean coast of Catalonia, the URV trains future professionals under the precepts of European harmonization, as a way of opening doors to a world of work without frontiers. With this aim, we currently provide over 130 different programmes of study in all areas of knowledge and at all levels, courses that are now enjoyed by over 14,000 students, with 34% of our 2,700 postgraduate students being international. The university has a staff of 2,900 members.

The special emphasis that the URV places on research allows it to play a leading role in regional development, especially in those areas closely linked to the region's economic strengths. The URV is also strategically committed to contribute to the the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## 2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

### Ethical and professional aspects

#### Strengths:

We would like to highlight that - as it is shown in the results of the survey launched (please, see [https://enquestes.urv.cat/r/90016013\\_6018fdd1bb25e7.03260930](https://enquestes.urv.cat/r/90016013_6018fdd1bb25e7.03260930)) - our researchers have the perception that the URV is making a great effort to comply with the Ethical and Professional principles. The 89% of the respondents strongly agree or agree on the compliance of the principles by the institution.

Furthermore, it is important to notice that there is an evaluation system in place that covers all professional categories, carried out by an external body with known criteria. This evaluation takes place every 6 years and evaluates the scientific production of our researchers. Although this evaluation is not compulsory for all researchers, passing satisfactory this evaluation implies a rise in the researcher's salary. The evaluation is done by external agencies, depending on the regional and national government, constituted by external evaluators without conflicts of interest.

#### Weaknesses:

R1 and R2 researchers have indicated that there is not enough information on the research career path in our institution and, in general, in the Spanish research system. Without this proper information, the researchers cannot properly plan their professional career development, either in an academic institution (as the URV) or in a company.

Having detected this weakness, the URV suggests Action 1 (described in the action plan below), to overcome this issue.

### Selection and recruitment

Since we are a public organization, recruitment must follow public rules, and therefore OTM-R principles are already taken into account. However, we plan new actions to make it more evident and efficient.

#### Strengths:

In general, at the URV job positions are properly published with enough information (in terms of required qualifications, experience and other merits) to guarantee open, transparent and merit-based competition. In fact, the URV objective is to attract the best talent, so a merit-based recruitment is a must. Advertisements must be done following principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R). The URV uses internationally validated platforms -such as Euraxess Jobs- when publishing a position, so candidates from all over the world can apply.

#### Weaknesses:

Special attention is necessary to ensure that the selection criteria are oriented to guarantee that the process is really OTM based. Our administrative support staff is trained to ensure that candidate assessment is based on objective evidences, not just, for instance, on the potential of the candidate in terms of relationships, networks, the university where the candidate comes from, etc.

To overcome this issue, we have started internal training for people who participates in evaluation committees, in terms of, for instance, “unconscious bias in staff selection processes”. An action to be implemented in the future is to make this training compulsory to all people participating in a selection process. This is Action 2 in the Action plan.

We also detected the need to publicise the mechanisms and procedures for appealing selection committee decisions when rights are violated in a selection process. Candidates must know in which they can appeal and how to do it. Although the URV always includes the process in the publication of the job position, it seems that this is not enough. And it is also necessary to publicise the repercussions that may have for the selection committee not to respect the established principles. This is Action 5 in the Action Plan.

## **Working conditions**

As a public University, we are strongly regulated by public law and, therefore, we must follow what it is legally stated in terms of salaries, contract conditions and social security. In addition, since we are a young university with up-to-date facilities and quite new buildings, we could say that working places are excellent for our staff to perform their work, also adapted to people with disabilities. Finally, we would like to highlight that our university is implementing our 3rd Gender Equality Plan (<https://www.urv.cat/media/upload/arxiu/igualtat/3rdEqualityPlan.pdf>) to reduce Gender equality issues, and a URV Research Program (~1M€/year), which provides researchers with pocket money for their research.

The analysis of the survey reveals a possible weakness in the satisfaction of the working conditions by R2 researchers (wages, contract, recognition, etc.). We need to deeply analyse R2 situation to try to improve it. In short, non-stability and wage conditions are a source of dissatisfaction. The R2 case is the one that shows the most dissatisfaction, but the other categories also show high percentages in the “disagree” and “Completely disagree” answers. We detected that perhaps the expectations in these aspects are higher than the real possibilities. R1 researchers in general show little knowledge of the different aspects related to working conditions. The most notable result is ignorance on the claims and appeals procedures (35.5% of respondents).

### **Strengths:**

The support and supervision of R1 researchers by their supervisors is highly valued. The results of the survey show that incorporating newcomer researchers into research groups makes integration easier and it is well evaluated. This positive input should be conveyed and congratulated to researchers (Action 3 defined below)

### **Weaknesses:**

We detected low satisfaction in some aspects of the working conditions, such as salary or job stability, which do not meet expectations. In general, R2s are the least satisfied. Actions should be taken to report on the academic career, the different stages and the conditions to be expected at each stage (Action 1). It would also be necessary to analyze in more depth the reasons for the dissatisfaction of the R2, in order to act (Action 4).

## Training and development

The URV centralize all our researchers training through the PROFID program (<https://www.ice.urv.cat/moduls/formacio/planificacioProfid.php>), which continuously offers high quality courses. The program is based on researchers needs and takes into account URV directions. There is a special training plan offered to PhD Students (<http://www.doctor.urv.cat/en/phd-students/transversal-training/>) offering transversal skills training for their professional careers as future researchers.

Regarding professional development, we see a very similar response profile between different roles (R1 to R4). The very favourable response in the R1 stands out in a positive way. This indicates that good work is being done in this area.

Again, R2 researchers show less agreement on issues such as identifying a reference person, for guidance and personal assessment. Overcoming this issue is the objective of Action 1 in the Action Plan.

### Strengths

The training and information that researchers receive at the R1 stage is highly valued. There is also a clear desire for updating and continuous improvement among the research staff. Good work is being done in this area.

### Weaknesses

A shortcoming is again detected in the R2 group, especially in the matter of having a clear reference to who to turn to. More than 21% of the respondents answered, "I don't know" to the question of whether they have clearly identified a reference within the institution, whom to turn to for information and guidance.

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

No, they have not. The URV priorities in HRS4R and URV commitment to C&C and OTM-R principles have not changed.

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

Since the last Action Plan was submitted (2017), the URV has experienced an important Governing Board change, after the elections that took place in May 2018. Therefore, due to changes in some internal technical structures and, because of the pandemics, the process has been delayed for one year.

We also wanted to renew the Steering Committee, with representatives from R1 to R4 researchers groups, which is gender balanced and has representatives from all our areas of knowledge.

Finally, we re-invented the collection of our researchers' opinion, through a new on-line survey application, much user-friendly and with many data analysis possibilities (<https://enquestes.urv.cat/s3/fd53d4/i-248JvwuwNWm4sYQQI-145229/?sguid=248JvwuwNWm4sYQQI>). We also published a video with information on the process to facilitate the communication of the survey (<https://youtu.be/8uyeW-u7mpc>)

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

The URV current Governing Board is putting much efforts and financial resources on attracting researchers, especially R1 and R4. Therefore, the URV will substantially increase the number of R1, who are offered a staff contract by the institution to undertake their PhD in our institution.

In addition, we are promoting the recruitment of internationally recognised researchers, through a self-funded program, that we called “Martina Castells”, as the first Spanish woman with a PhD (<https://www.urv.cat/ca/recerca/suport/programes/urv/martina-castells/>).

Finally, with the creation of the European Pre-award Office (in March 2019; <https://www.urv.cat/en/research/support/pre-award/>), the URV is intensively promoting the participation in Marie S. Curie Actions, a bottom-up approach to all our researchers for attracting talent to URV research groups, following Marie S. Curie rules, well aligned with the C&C and OTM-R principles.

### **3. Actions**

#### **Proposed ACTIONS**

##### Action 1. Train our researchers on research career and job opportunities.

Include training/info session on job opportunities and research career in the PROFID (coordinated by ICE) and the Transversal Skills Training Program, led by the Doctoral School.

Person Responsible: Vice-Rector for Research and Scientific Planning

Deadline: Des 2023

##### Action 2. Inform and raise awareness in the community to avoid the “unconscious bias” in staff selection processes.

To run specific training to avoid “unconscious bias” when participating in staff selection committees. In the future, to certify one’s has received this training could be a condition to participate in a staff selection committee.

Person Responsible: Vice-Rector for Research and Scientific Planning

Deadline: 2023

##### Action 3. Formally congratulate the PhD supervisors for the relationship/follow-up with their fellows/PhD students.

Congratulations to the supervisors for the job well done (according to the survey results), through the Doctoral School Governing Board. Make sure the congratulations are conveyed to the PhD supervisors through the PhD Programs coordinators.

Person Responsible: Vice-rector for doctoral training

Deadline: 2021

##### Action 4. Improve the perception of R2 on working conditions.

Collect information to further analyse the recently detected dissatisfaction of R2 researchers, through a new survey or discussion groups.

Implement the improvement actions established from this analysis.

Analyse and improve current mechanisms for the recruitment, enhance working conditions of postdoctoral researchers, and stabilization mechanisms based on the needs of the URV and the excellence of postdocs.

Person Responsible: Vice-Rector for Research and Scientific Planning

Deadline: 2023

#### Action 5. Inform the community about complaints and appeals procedures at the URV

Disseminate information on the different mechanisms that the URV makes available to researchers to submit complaints or claims. Publish the URV Ombudsman's website in English in order to improve access to the information to those researchers who are not yet fluent in Catalan.

Person Responsible: URV Ombudsman

Deadline: 2021

**Please provide the link to the dedicated webpage(s) on your organisation's web site \*:**

URL \*: <https://www.urv.cat/ca/recerca/estrategia/hr-excellence/>

#### **Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles**

The URV has formally incorporated the OTM-R principles in the Interim Assessment phase. At that time, we diagnosed compliance with the principles through the OTM-R Checklist and integrated the necessary improvement actions into the second URV Action Plan. Since then we have continued to focus our efforts on improving compliance with both the OTM-R principles.

In addition, we would like to highlight that *the URV*, through its technical team, has also helped other Universities in Catalonia, such as the Universitat de Vic (<https://www.uvic.cat/hrs4r>) and Universitat de Girona (<https://www.udg.edu/ca/investiga/hrs4r>), and CERCA centres, such as IISPV ([http://www.iispv.cat/personal/es\\_hr\\_excellence\\_in\\_research.html](http://www.iispv.cat/personal/es_hr_excellence_in_research.html)).

We are also participating to a study entitled "Taking stock, evaluating the achievements and identifying the way forward for the ERA Priority 3 policy measures" being undertaken on behalf of the European Commission DG RTD Unit G2. The study will contribute to the shaping of future development of the Charter&Code, HRS4R and Euraxess. We are looking for national/regional initiatives that encourage participation in the HRS4R process.

Finally, the URV is part of the Aurora Alliance (<https://alliance.aurora-network.global/>), one of the 48 EC recognised European Universities Networks, awarded and funded by the Erasmus+ and H2020 Programs. The URV is leading the Work Package on Human Capital in the H2020 Aurora Alliance R&I Project. From this position, the URV will help other Universities within the network to endorse the C&C and the OTM-R principles and to get into the HRS4R process.

#### **4. Implementation**

##### **General overview of the implementation process:**

The URV was part of the 4th cohort on the HRS4R pilot program, led by the EC. Therefore, we incorporated OTM-R principles in the second Action Plan (2016-18). At that time, we also prepared and presented the OTM-R diagnostic checklist. In addition, owing to the implementation of these principles to the HR strategy, the URV has performed the following actions:

- ✓ Creation of the Research Staff Section of HR Service, approved by the Governing Council on April, the 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016, to deal with the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researched (HRS4R), specially what OTM-R policy concerns.

- ✓ Adaptation of the HR Service Quality System to integrate the HRS4R and OTM-R principles. Elaboration and publication on the website of the University of:
  - Quality Policy ([https://www.urv.cat/media/upload/arxiu/treballar-urv/SRH/QualityPolicy\\_SRH.pdf](https://www.urv.cat/media/upload/arxiu/treballar-urv/SRH/QualityPolicy_SRH.pdf))
  - Quality Manual
  - Charter of Services (Catalan version, [https://www.urv.cat/media/upload/arxiu/treballar-urv/SRH/Carta\\_de\\_serveis\\_SRH.pdf](https://www.urv.cat/media/upload/arxiu/treballar-urv/SRH/Carta_de_serveis_SRH.pdf)). This Charter of Services meets the needs and expectations of the relevant groups.
  
- ✓ Definition, approval and publication of the URV OTM-R Policy ([https://seuelectronica.urv.cat/media/upload/pdf//fou\\_otmr\\_editora\\_4\\_1\\_3950.pdf](https://seuelectronica.urv.cat/media/upload/pdf//fou_otmr_editora_4_1_3950.pdf)). This policy addresses the following points:
  - General considerations on the HRS4R process at the URV
  - Main Goals
  - Scope
  - Selection processes, including: publicity of the call, receipt of applications, evaluation of applications and selection, recruitment and reception and working conditions
  - Applicable legislation and regulations
  
- ✓ Constitution of a **HRS4R Steering Committee**, which meets the following conditions:
  - Represents all types of researchers who, according to the EC, are classified from R1 to R4
  - Gender balanced
  - Represents all areas of knowledge of the institution
  - Represents working contract conditions
  - The best are represented (in terms of Scientific output)

The functions of the Steering Committee are:

- To support the development and implementation of human resources policies and strategy for URV Research.
- Monitor the development, review and updating of URV's HRS4R action plans, based on the set of key indicators and recommendations established by the European Commission and the URV's own guidelines.
- Advise all the agents involved in the execution of the action plans to achieve the best possible results.
- Advise the governing team and various management units of the URV so that all the principles of C&C and OTM-R are gradually incorporated into the policies and institutional culture of the URV.



The first tasks faced by the Steering Committee were:

- Preparation, launch and analysis of the results of the survey on compliance with the principles of the Charter and Code at the URV
- Preparation of the Internal Review for the renewal phase

The Committee has been working on these tasks remotely since November 2020 and met electronically in plenary or in parallel working group sessions on November 6<sup>th</sup> and December, 22<sup>th</sup>, 2020; February 10<sup>th</sup> and March 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

The co-chairs of the Steering Committee informed the union representatives of the Teaching and Research Staff of the process and of the results obtained, in sessions held on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021. It was made available to the representatives all the documentation and detailed results of the opinion survey.

The Internal Review and the results of the survey have been presented to the Commission for Human Resources and to the URV's Science and Transfer Policy Commission. Both commissions have approved the new 2021-23 Action Plan in April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and April 22<sup>th</sup>, 2021 respectively. Subsequently, the URV Governing Council ratified this approval at its meeting on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

#### **How will the implementation committee and/or steering group regularly oversee progress?\***

The HRS4R Steering Committee is formed by representatives of researchers (from R1 to R4) and is gender and knowledge area balanced, to guarantee a broader and equal vision on research concerning aspects.

This committee is responsible for regularly monitor the development of the planned actions and analyse the evolution of the Action Plan. The Steering Committee meets every 6 months. Each session will be summarized in conclusions and agreements with the aim of correcting possible deviations from the plan or updating it if necessary. The Steering Committee will receive technical support by the Human Resources Unit.

On this occasion, the committee carried out a survey among all URV researchers in order to find out their opinion on compliance with the URV with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers. The survey also called for suggestions and proposals on the aspects included in the four blocks of principles of the Charter and the Code.

#### **How do you intend to involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?\***

The URV plans to continue disseminating HRS4R actions throughout the university community in order to guarantee compliance with the principles of C&C. We have recently carried out an information campaign to all research staff via the website and e-mail, on the development of HRS4R at the URV. We have made an explanatory video in Catalan and English about C&C and the HRS4R program (<https://youtu.be/8uyeW-u7mpc>). The goal is to inform and motivate community participation in the survey and scheduled actions. We plan to set up an R2 working group soon to further analyse the causes of dissatisfaction detected. Advances in the implementation of the HRS4R strategy will be presented and discussed with union representatives, through official bodies (Board and Committee). We will also continue to work with the usual channels that the URV has established to deal with research and human resources issues, such as the Scientific and Transfer Policy Commission and the Delegate Commission for



Human Resources. The website dedicated to HRS4R (<https://www.urv.cat/ca/reerca/estrategia/hr-excellence/>) is the place where we publish updated information about the program for the whole university community.

**How do you proceed with the alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? Make sure the HRS4R is recognized in the organisation's research strategy, as the overarching HR policy.**

The HRS4R guidelines are fully integrated into the URV 2nd Strategic Plan for Research (<https://www.urv.cat/en/research/strategy/research-urv/>) as can be seen in the specific lines of action related to the research staff:

## **AXIS 2: THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION**

### **Objective 2.1. To improve the capacity to attract and retain talent**

Lines of action

- 2.1.1. Attract more and better doctoral students
- 2.1.2. Design and implement a programme of contracts for post-doctoral students and visiting teaching staff
- 2.1.3. Facilitate the integration of new contracted researchers

### **Objective 2.2. To plan a professional career**

Lines of action

- 2.2.1. Improve the employability of doctors
- 2.2.2. Encourage training, professionalization and mobility
- 2.2.3. Improve the professional support given to research activities
- 2.2.4. Drive actions for the management of diversity and measures of the URV's Equality Plan

### **Objective 2.3. To plan the handover to the next generation**

Lines of action

- 2.3.1. Predict and facilitate the renewal of senior staff
- 2.3.2. Bring teaching needs into line with research

Analysing the objectives of the II Strategic Research Plan in the context of this self-evaluation process and the results of the survey, we think that objective 2.1 could be improved.

It is necessary to improve: the attraction of postdoctoral researchers, their working conditions and the stabilization mechanisms based on the needs of the URV and the excellence of postdocs. This action would contribute to the institutional objectives of the URV as well as to improve the satisfaction of the R2 group (see [Action 4](#) in the action plan).

The objectives of the HRS4R have been included also – as mentioned above- in the Quality Policy of Human Resources and in the Quality Manual, the Charter of Services of the Human Resources Unit and the URV OTM-R Policy. All these documents have been internally disseminated and published on the web site of the University. The HRS4R monitoring process is a strategic process within the Human Resources Service Quality System process map.

### **How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?\***

The planned actions will be incorporated into the specific programs already in operation at the URV for each of the areas. Each action has an implementation responsible person, which guaranties that the action will take place. In addition, the Steering Committee will supervise that the actions are completed in time.

### **How will you monitor progress (timeline)?**

The person responsible for implementing each action will report to the Steering Committee on the achievement of the objectives every six months (or with the agreed periodicity according to the needs of the actions to be implemented). The Steering Committee will monitor progress in the overall implementation of the plan on an equal basis. The steering committee shall duly inform the governing bodies of the University and the University Community through its representatives.

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

Each action of the plan has indicators for monitoring and evaluation purposes:

Action 1: Number of training sessions, Number of attendees.

Action 2: Number of information sessions.

Action 3. Evidences on the formal congratulation through the Doctoral School.

Action 4. Evidences on the development and conclusions of the new survey or the focus groups.

Action 5. Number of training sessions, Number of attendees, Ombudsman web in English operative